

AN
ENQUIRY
INTO
THE DOCTRINES
of
NECESSITY AND
PREDESTINATION.
IN
FOUR DISCOURSES
PREACHED BEFORE
THE UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD.

BY
EDWARD COPLESTON, D.D.
PROVOST OF ORIEL
COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND
PREBENDARY OF
ROCHESTER.
LONDON,

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IN
FOUR DISCOURSES
PREACHED BEFORE
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.
WITH NOTES,
AND
AN APPENDIX
ON THE
SEVENTEENTH ARTICLE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY
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PROVOST OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND PREBENDARY OF
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PREFACE:

A SMALL treatise by the late Mr. Dawson of Sedbergh, published about twenty years ago, suggested to me the leading argument of the FIRST of these Discourses. It is entitled 'The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity briefly invalidated.' The author lays down three axioms, as the foundation of his reasoning.

1. If we make a false supposition, and reason justly from it, a contradiction or absurdity will be contained in the conclusion.'

2. Every action or exertion voluntarily made is with a design, or in hopes of obtaining some end.

3. All practical principles must either be founded in truth; or believed to be so for the moment that they operate.

From these premises he infers that where the doctrine of necessity is firmly believed, and made use of as a practical principle, *motives cease to operate*. Assuming then that in a future state our faculties will be enlarged, our understandings enlightened, and our apprehensions quickened, he concludes that a continual progress in knowledge must at length terminate in absolute inactivity: and this conclusion, that *activity*, which throughout nature is observed to accompany *intelligence*, should be destroyed by the rational faculties being enlarged, he justly thinks is so paradoxical, as to throw much discredit on the principle from which it is by fair reasoning deduced.

It was perhaps not the most judicious mode of applying the argument, to suppose the case of *another state* of intellectual progress, in order to exemplify it in its full force. For that is, to assume more conditions than are necessary— and those conditions all open to cavil or objection. It is quite enough for the conclusion aimed at, to apply the argument to human nature *as it actually is*; and the conclusion thus deduced is sufficiently absurd to overthrow the hypothesis.

The development of this principle so applied is attempted in the earlier part of the FIRST Discourse. But besides this, as an argument of equal authority, and as one *concurrent* in its application, it appeared to me that the *moral* consequences of the hypothesis in question might also be pursued: for the notion of a *moral* agent gifted with mental powers, the *improvement* of which naturally tends, to the weakening or the extinction

of moral principle, is an absurdity similar to the former, and equally conclusive against the truth of the supposition from which it flows—a method of reasoning which I do not recollect to have seen adopted by any writer on a continued plan, although nothing is more common than an occasional reference to the topic, that the theory of necessity excludes the ideas of right and wrong. The establishment of these positions forms the main business of the FIRST Discourse.

In the SECOND Discourse the difficulties arising out of the belief in a superintending *Providence*, as compatible with the *Free-will* of man, are considered. This question is intimately connected with that concerning the *origin of evil*. *Why* evil exists, is undoubtedly mysterious. But we know it *does* exist. Any reasoning therefore which proceeds on the absence of evil from the universe we have nothing to do with. But assuming such a mixed constitution of things as actually exists, the great principles of natural religion become intelligible. Without evil, actual or possible, without uncertainty, without the consciousness that *much* depends on ourselves, there could be no trial, no exercise of virtue, no trust in Providence. As on the one hand, if there were *no* settled order of things, we should be at a loss for any principles of action; so on the other, if *every thing* were understood to be settled and fixed beforehand, there would be no occasion for vigilance or foresight, or for prayer. Reason then teaches us that principles of *both kinds* must be admitted, viz.

1. That God foreknows all things; and yet that he deals with man as if future events were contingent in their nature.

2. That God's providence controls the order of events; and yet that man is free to choose and to act Each proposition is separately demonstrable: they are not *contradictory*, and yet their *congruity* may be *inconceivable*.

Whatever is thus proved of *natural* religion, is applicable by ANALOGY to *revealed*. The *difficulties* and *apparent incongruities* which belong to the one, we ought to expect to find also in the other, as they profess to come from the same author. We should regard them therefore in the case of revealed religion, not as *objections* to its credibility, but as *evidences* of its truth.

In the THIRD Discourse, this mode of reasoning is *transferred* to the

Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination. If there be in natural religion two fundamental propositions, both *true* and both *intelligible*, separately taken, we cannot be surprised to find each of these truths distinctly recognized and confirmed in Scripture; and it is unreasonable to expect that one should be so propounded as to *exclude* the other.

Much of the error and perplexity attending these enquiries is shewn to proceed from a wrong use made of Scripture language: for God is not revealed to us in Scripture as he is *absolutely*, but as he is *relatively* to ourselves. Archbishop King's rule of analogical interpretation is here recommended: and in a NOTE subjoined to this Discourse a full account is given of the Archbishop's argument in his Sermon on Predestination and Foreknowledge; together with a general dissertation upon the mode of reasoning by analogy, and an examination of the objections brought against this principle of interpreting Scripture.

The FOURTH Discourse enters upon the main subject of the Calvinistic controversy, viz. *whether there be few that be saved*—and *whether each man's destiny is to be regarded as settled from all eternity*. The doctrine of the Church of England upon these points is shewn to be agreeable to Scripture, and to be delivered in a manner conformable to the principles maintained in this Enquiry: that is, each of those truths which the opposite parties espouse as their creed, is declared to be contained in Scripture, without attempting to explain their union, and without permitting one to obliterate the other.

In the course of this argument frequent mention is made of the *equivocal use of words*, as the great source of error among men. Nothing is more common with argumentative writers than this remark; and yet the full extent of its importance does not seem to be understood, even by those who are aware of its truth: for it continually happens that the same writer who has laid down the caution most distinctly, and has employed it in the solution of a proposed difficulty, is guilty of the fault himself in the next page. It is most common too in treating of those subjects, where it is most necessary to guard against it, I mean in metaphysical enquiries; for in these, there being no sensible object to correct our misapprehensions, *every* thing depends upon the meaning of the words: and if this meaning be in the slightest degree changed, and the change escapes our notice, it is mere matter of chance whether our conclusions are true or false. It is also

to be observed, that the more *familiar* the words are about which the question turns, the more liable are we to be deceived by their ambiguity; because they not only excite less attention, but men are unwilling to suppose it possible that they should not exactly understand expressions which are so well established in use, and which are in every one's mouth.

An example of this error is produced in the First Discourse, in the use of the word *true*. People are not aware of the laxity with which this word is employed. We speak of a *true man*, a *true maxim*, a *true line*, a *true representation*, a *true diamond*, a *true report*, without suspecting that in each case the word bears a different sense. For by such phrases is meant an *honest* man, a *reasonable* maxim, a *perfect* line, an *accurate* representation, a *real* diamond, a *faithful* report. However slight the shade of difference may be, it is perhaps essential to the point under consideration; and the more subtle the enquiry is upon which we are engaged, the more likely is it that some nice discrimination may be necessary. Thus in the question concerning the *certainty* of future events, which the Stoics used to infer from the necessity of the *truth or falsehood* of the proposition which predicts them, in order to shew the fallacy of this argument it becomes necessary to define exactly the sense in which *truth* is used when we speak of a *true proposition*. And if it be found to mean, what all accurate writers define it to be, the agreement of a *representation* with the *thing represented*, there must be *something* previously existing, before this idea of truth can be entertained at all. '*Propositio vera* QUOD RES EST *'dicit.*' The original must be antecedent to the representation. An assertion therefore respecting the *future* may be probable or improbable, it may be honest or deceitful, it may be prudent or rash, it may have any relation we please to the mind of the person who makes it or of him who hears it, but it can have no relation at all to a thing which *is not*. Any reasoning therefore which assumes it to bear this sense, which really does not and which in fact cannot belong to it, is illusory. It turns merely upon the equivocation of a word.

If this method were rigidly pursued with all the terms most commonly employed in abstract reasoning, it would tend to abridge many a useless and to settle many a mischievous controversy. It is the key to a thousand errors which have abused mankind under the false name of philosophy; and nothing, I believe, would tend more to the advancement of knowledge than such an enquiry into the use of words; because the same

vigour of mind which is now often strained and baffled in contending with imaginary difficulties, would then be exerted in a right direction, or at least would not be spent in vain. Something of this kind I hope hereafter to be able to execute, not however without apprehension of incurring the displeasure of those who, if my speculations are well-founded, will appear to have lost their time in logomachy, and to have wasted their strength in endeavouring to grasp a phantom, or in fighting the air.

DISCOURSE 1:

ACTS 15:18.

KNOWN UNTO GOD ARE ALL HIS WORKS, FROM THE BEGINNING
OF THE WORLD.

NEXT to the idea of *power* in the supreme Being, that of his perfect *knowledge* of all that is doing in the world seems to be the first that arises in the mind of man, however undisciplined and uninstructed, even before any tolerable conception of what we call his moral attributes is formed. The most ignorant person, who talks of God's *seeing* every thing, and *hearing* every thing, never for a moment imagines that he sees and hears by such organs as we possess; or that the use of those faculties can be impeded in him as it often is in ourselves; that anything, for instance, can be hid from him, or come upon him by surprise, or be dimly and confusedly discovered. Whatever he knows, he knows perfectly: and although it is some improvement upon this idea, to conceive him knowing things *beforehand*, yet since human wisdom arrives often at such a degree of certainty about future events, that for all the purposes of life our foreknowledge is as much to be depended upon as our actual knowledge, as, for instance, that the sun will rise tomorrow—that the tide will ebb and flow at a given time—since, I say, experience teaches us this of ourselves, it is no violent step, but a natural and easy transition, to attribute this faculty in a much higher degree to God—or rather to conceive it as existing in him without any limitation at all. The more general statement indeed, that God does not exist in *time* but in eternity, and therefore that there is no room for the ideas *before* and *after* when speaking of *him*, and that the succession of events cannot to such a Being

make any difference, is perhaps beyond the reach of minds not accustomed to such abstraction: but the plainest and most unpractised thinker will find no difficulty in allowing, that God must see into futurity better than man can see; as one man sees better than another according to the strength of his faculties, and his superior acquaintance with the constitution of the universe: and if we assign these qualities without measure or limitation to God, what measure or limitation can it be reasonable to impose upon that foreknowledge which arises out of them?

Accordingly it may be observed, that one of the earliest religious practices of rude nations is to consult the Deity about that which is to come: plainly implying that foresight, which is the strongest evidence of superiority among men, must belong to God in a far more eminent degree. The counsel of Ahitophel was (the sacred historian observes) “as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God.”

The course indeed of the *material* world seems to proceed upon such fixed and uniform laws, that short experience joined to close attention is sufficient to enable a man, for all useful purposes, to anticipate the general result of causes now in action. In the *moral* world much greater uncertainty exists. Everyone feels that what depends upon the conduct of his fellow-creatures is less certain than what is to be brought about by the agency of the laws of matter: and yet even here, since man is a being of a certain composition, having such and such faculties, inclinations, affections, desires, and appetites, it is very possible for those who study his nature attentively, especially for those who have practical experience of any individual or of any community of men, to foretell how they will be affected, and how they will act under any supposed circumstances. The same power (in an unlimited degree as before) it is natural and reasonable to ascribe to that Being, who excels the wisest of us infinitely more than the wisest of us excels his fellow-creature.

It never enters the mind of a person who reflects in this way, that his anticipation of another's conduct lays any restraint upon that man's conduct when he comes to act. The anticipation indeed is relative to himself, not to the other. If it affected *him* in the remotest degree, his conduct would vary in proportion to the strength of the conviction in the mind of the thinker that he will so act. But no man really believes in this magical sympathy. No man supposes the *certainty* of the *event* (to use a

common but as I conceive an improper term) to correspond at all with the *certainty of him* who foretells or expects it. In fact every day's experience shews, that men are deceived in the event, even when they regarded themselves as most certain, and when they would readily have used the strongest phrases to denote that certainty, not from any intention to deceive, but from an honest persuasion that such an event must happen. How is it then? God can never be deceived—his knowledge therefore is always accompanied or followed by the event—and yet if we get an idea of what *his* knowledge is, by our own, why should we regard it as dragging the event along with it, when in our own case we acknowledge the two things to have no connection?

But here the advocate for necessity interposes, and says, True, *your* knowledge does not affect the event, over which you have no power: but God, who is all-powerful, who *made* all things as they are, and who *knows* all that will come to pass, must be regarded as rendering that *necessary* which he foreknows—just as even you may be considered accessory to the event which you anticipate, exactly in proportion to the share you have had in preparing the instruments or forming the minds of those who are to bring it about.

To this I answer, that the connection between *knowledge* and the *event* is not at all established by this argument. It is not because I *knew* what would follow, but because I *contributed towards it*, that it is influenced by me. You may if you please contend, that because God made everything, therefore all things that happen are done by him. This is taking another ground for the doctrine of necessity, which will be considered presently. All I maintain now is, that the notion of God's *foreknowledge* ought not to interfere in the slightest degree with our belief in the *contingency* of events, and the *freedom* of human actions. The confusion has, I conceive, arisen chiefly from the ambiguity of the word *certainty*, used as it is even by learned writers, both in its relation to the mind which thinks, and to the object about which it is thinking

[See Tucker, vol. 4. chap. 26, on Free Will.]

Let us now attend to the graver question, whether because God made the world and all things in it, therefore everything that happens, human conduct as well as the rest, must be regarded as proceeding from him, and determined beforehand by his direction, in all its detail. Whatever

has been, is, or will be, could not, as some say, be otherwise. We, vain and insignificant creatures, full of our own importance, imagine that we act from ourselves, that we can deliberate, choose, reject, command, obey, forbid, contrive, hasten or hinder a thousand things, when in fact this is all delusion—all the creation of our own fancy. We are but members of the machine, like the rest; and though we may please ourselves with thinking that we act an independent part, the real truth is, we have no voice, no power, no control in what is going on—all would take its course just the same, whether for good or for ill, were we to give ourselves no concern whatever in the matter.

Such, I believe, is a fair statement of the doctrine of philosophical necessity, or predestination confined to this life. It is not with a view of restraining our enquiry to this sterile and unprofitable field, that I have now entered upon it; but it has a close connection with certain religious opinions relating to another life, which harass and perplex many minds, and which, when they assume a certain determinate form and aspect, cause one of the most melancholy corruptions of our faith to which a Christian can be subject. And since the ground on which the doctrine of necessity rests, is the same with that on

which the creed of the Calvinist is built, although the latter defends his opinions also by the language of Scripture, and considers that to be his strong hold; yet whatever discredit can be thrown upon the doctrine of *fatalism* in this life, may be at once transferred to the doctrine of *predestination* in another, as far as the appeal is made to human reason in support of that doctrine. And if the view which I propose to take of the question as it relates to this life be correct, it will also serve to explain *by analogy* many of those difficulties which occur to the reader of holy Scripture; and will account for those frequent declarations concerning God's purposes and decrees respecting a future life, without admitting the bold and dangerous construction which the Calvinist fastens upon them, and which, if unhappily he lived up to his opinions, would go far to defeat the gracious end and design of the Gospel altogether.

Such is the general scope of this enquiry. To follow out the details of the argument

will require more than one discourse. On the present occasion I propose to direct your attention to that preliminary point at which we are now

arrived; and to consider whether the opinion of the Fatalist is reconcilable with other positions which we can prove to be undeniably true.

Now if we cast our eyes on the world as it actually is, we readily perceive that the activity and energy of men is increased by a persuasion that they have it in their power to attain certain ends—and that they never think of attempting that which they know to be impossible, or beyond their reach, or not capable of being obtained or averted by anything they can do. To be taking measures for procuring a fertile season, or for stopping the mouth of a volcano, would be a certain proof of insanity. Men do indeed often engage in vain and chimerical undertakings, but it is under a belief of their practicability; and as soon as they discover their error they leave off. Ignorant people also will take needless pains to promote those designs which they favour, and which are going on steadily through the agency of other causes. Thus a child or a savage may exhaust strength in endeavoring to quicken the motion of a ship, and fancy that he is contributing something towards it; but as soon as he learns that all goes on as well without him, and that he really lends no help, he desists as a matter of course. The same thing has been pointed out repeatedly in the disquisitions of political economy; and the wisest statesmen have long ceased to apply the agency of government in a thousand cases, which formerly occupied their attention, finding that the causes in operation are quite adequate and effectual to the desired end, without their interference.

Again, not only as in the cases we have been supposing, does a man desist from action as soon as he discovers that some superior influence *entirety* frustrates or *entirety* supersedes all his efforts, but in cases of a mixed nature, as far as this paramount influence is found to prevail, in the same *degree* does it tend to deaden the exertions of individuals placed under such a system. In those communities, for instance, where all hope of advancement is denied to a certain class, it is notorious that industry is less active, and that all exertion, mental as well as bodily, is more languid. And even when all hope of advancement is not cut off, yet when it depends not upon the merit or address of the individual, but on the caprice of a despot, how feeble comparatively and inefficient is the motive to action.

Of the two grand motives then which actuate reasonable beings, hope and fear, the influence is always diminished in proportion to the opinion men have of the unalterable conditions under which they are placed. The nearest approach to that necessity which the laws of the material universe imply, is to be found in the laws of civil society: and if these are such as to render exertion needless or fruitless, indolence uniformly takes place of exertion, when good is before them, and languor or despondency instead of manly endeavors to avert any apprehended evil. Such is universally admitted to be the effect of our own laws for the maintenance of the poor: the motive of *fear* is almost extinguished: and on the other band, from the absence of *hope*, the labour of slaves is well known to be less productive than that of freemen, and this, precisely in proportion to the persuasion they have that they must always be slaves, and that no prospect of emancipation lies before them. So too in the conduct of those who are condemned to death, and to whom all the steps that lead to the final execution of their sentence assume the appearance of inevitable necessity. What stronger instinct is there in man than the love of life, and what incredible exertions have been often made to preserve it! Yet mark the conduct of him who is doomed to perish under sentence of the law: no struggle or resistance even to avoid that at which nature shudders—but a calm submission to decrees which he is convinced must take effect, however idly he may contend against them.

It would be easy to multiply examples and authorities in support of this position. The memorable case of the plague of Athens will occur to many of my hearers, in which after the irresistible nature of the visitation was once impressed upon the people's minds, either a stupid despair, or an utter abandonment of all moral and religious principle succeeded. But the fact it is presumed will hardly be denied, that when men really believe, and the belief is present to their minds, that a decree has passed upon them, their own motives to action are weakened, if not wholly extinguished.

Will the Necessarian reply, that our exertions are as much fated as the things themselves which come to pass? This answer can never be admitted. It is assuming the very point in dispute. We have as much right to expect that he should accept our view of the case as we his, upon mere authority. The reasoning however which we have alleged is founded upon

admitted *facts*— facts which *Necessarians* no more deny than the advocates of the opposite opinions—and the strong tendency they have to overthrow the doctrine of necessity cannot be gainsaid.

Perhaps it will be said that the Fatalist, firmly convinced of the truth of his own opinions, feels himself to be an appointed instrument in the hands of this over-ruling power—an integral part of the grand scheme of the universe - and therefore that he will not be disposed to slacken his activity, or to shrink from that mode of action, which is to him like the discharge of any of the animal functions. This may he *said*; but it never will be *believed* that without the feeling of uncertainty, he should have the same hopes and fears, and consequently the same motive to action, with those who regard the event as liable to be affected by their own free choice. Neither, if there be any truth or force in the foregoing reasonings, *ought* it to be believed; for we have seen that the universal and actual tendency of such a belief as the Necessarian inculcates is, to relax our exertions in proportion as that belief predominates in the mind.

In fact, the usual resource of the Fatalist is of an opposite kind. He maintains with some vehemence, that those who hold his theoretical opinions, do *not* conform to them in practice; and he is ready to quote instances of illustrious men, and even of whole sects, who, under the profession of fatalism, lived exactly as other people do, took the same precautions, expressed the same hopes and fears, planned as anxiously and laboured as industriously as those who look upon events to be wholly contingent in their nature. But what does this answer amount to? It is a confession that they do not really believe what they profess. *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*. Though they affect to talk as philosophers, they act as the vulgar; and exhibit in their lives a practical refutation of all their speculative conclusions.

Neither again is it absolutely true, that where this opinion of fatalism really occupies the mind, it is wholly dormant in practice. Among the Mahometans it is inculcated as an article of faith; and though among them, as everywhere else, whatever contradicts the first principles of our nature cannot operate long, or habitually, or often, yet upon great and striking occasions, such as the plague or war, we are told that thousands *do* act upon this conviction—that they despise precaution, and expose themselves blindly to all hazards, as being sure that nothing they can do

will hasten or retard their end one moment.

It is moreover contended, that none of those practical evils are to be dreaded which the adversaries of fatalism regard as connected with it, because the bulk of mankind will never have leisure so far to abstract their minds as to conceive the simple truth. Habit with them will always supersede reflection; and habit is formed by successive acts, by natural instinct, by unthinking appetite, and by the example of those among whom we live, and whose modes of acting and thinking we imperceptibly adopt. And thus if even the philosophical advocate for necessity cannot avoid talking as if his will were free, and as if events were liable to be affected by it, there is no great reason to fear that with the generality of men the persuasion will ever gain an ascendancy adverse to the real interests of life.

Now this is precisely the point to which I was desirous of leading the whole question. For if *to discover the true relations of things* be one of the proper employments of our being, if in proportion to the exercise and improvement of our intellectual faculties we come to see these things more clearly and to think of them more justly, so that our progress in this knowledge is a kind of measure of our intellectual advancement, it would follow, *upon the hypothesis of fatalism*, that every step we advance in knowledge we recede from utility; and that in the same proportion as we grow wiser, we become less fit and less disposed to fulfill the purposes of our being. If fatalism represent the true relations of things, the path of error is then the path of utility and of happiness: truth has a tendency to lead us away from both: and the Creator has formed us full of active powers and principles, and yet with a capacity and a disposition to draw nearer and nearer to that state, which, if we could ever actually reach it, would make all these faculties and principles implanted in us useless, and would reduce us to absolute inactivity.

But again, man is not only an *active* being, he is also a *moral* agent. He is not only made for the pursuit of his own good certain powerful internal springs of action, he is also furnished with a sense of right and wrong, a feeling that he *ought* to do some things and not to do others, without reference to his immediate pleasure, but because he would be justly blamable for doing otherwise. These two constitute the most essential principles of his nature. We have seen how the doctrine of necessity is

incompatible with the one—let us now briefly enquire, how the other is affected by it; pursuing here the same method of investigation, that is, first taking a view of man as he actually *is*, in respect of moral principles, and then considering what he *would be*, in the same respect, if the doctrine of Necessity were true.

Now it cannot be denied, that in the habitual judgment of all mankind the moral quality of actions depends upon the freedom of the agent. Praise and blame, reward and punishment, uniformly imply, that we think the party who is the object of them might have acted otherwise: and as soon as it is discovered that he acted under compulsion, we no longer measure the action by the standard of duty. It is in fact the first excuse which a culprit makes, if he can, that his will had no share in the deed. The deed may, it is true, although proceeding from ignorance or from an extraneous power, still be culpable to a certain degree, if that ignorance were not inevitable, or if the person placed himself voluntarily in that state of subjection which deprived him of choice. But still our judgments in these matters all have respect to one principle—that man is not accountable for what was not in his own power. If there be a strict physical necessity, as if one man hurt another by being forced against him, although a momentary sense of anger may arise, yet it would be quite absurd to impute blame to the party so impelled; and no one consulting reason only ever does so. Further, if the necessity be *not absolute* or *physical* like this, but depending on *moral* causes almost equally powerful, we still acquit the agent of responsibility; as in the case of soldiers performing their military duty, or the mere executioners of laws and decrees, however severe. And so with regard to good actions, as soon as it is found that they are not spontaneous—that some secret bias or impulse made it impossible for the person to withhold the good he has done—we even grudge the praise and admiration which his conduct may have before extorted from us. And although in all these cases, as far as the will of the agent can be ascertained to coincide with the orders he executes, whether good *or* evil, we are disposed to ascribe to him some share of the quality of the action, yet in exact proportion to his efficacy in bringing it about, is the praise or the blame which we think justly belonging to him; and the expression of concurrent will on his part inclines us only to regard him with favor or displeasure, just as we should

regard an indifferent spectator, who had confessedly no share in the action itself which he was then beholding, but who signified corresponding emotions, and thus far afforded evidence of his own character.

And not only does this judgment arise in the breast, when we form an estimate of the conduct of *others*, but there is no palliative more frequently applied to an uneasy conscience, no surer advocate of crime and falsehood, no argument more apt to stifle the virtuous emotions and kindly feelings of our nature, than this plea of necessity. When this cause really and literally exists, the most solemn obligations, and instincts more sacred, if possible, even than they, have been known to yield. We turn from such cases with horror, but we pity rather than condemn the victim thus entangled, as it were, in the inevitable net of fate. But the invention of man, when bent either upon some favorite object, or willing to vindicate his, crimes, is ever busy in devising *pretended forms* of necessity to sanction a deviation from moral rectitude. And thus it is that evil of every kind public and private, cruel wars, oppressive government, unjust measures of state, dishonesty, deceit, rapine, and even murder, find a ready excuse. Men prove how valid and substantial the real plea is, by grasping thus eagerly at its shadow and mere resemblance, whenever the case will bear it. *Artificial difficulties* are misnamed *necessity*—and then, their “poverty but not their will consents” to the most dreadful crimes. For the voice of all mankind does undoubtedly bear testimony to this rule—that in proportion as the case *approaches* to absolute necessity, in the same degree is the offence of the party extenuated, and his responsibility abated.

Now let us suppose that, not only on some great and rare occasions, but in *all the concerns* of life, that plea could be with truth alleged, which we allow to operate as an absolution even from the greatest crimes. Must not the knowledge or the belief of such a system tend to loosen all moral restraint, to confound all duties, to deaden moral feeling, and to silence the voice of conscience? Not that we suppose these effects will ever actually be produced to any extensive degree, because delusion will never prevail long over the fixed laws of our nature - but on the supposition that the doctrine of necessity is *true*, this conclusion must needs follow in *morals*, as before it did in the case of *active principles*. The more we learn

the truth of things, that is, the wiser we grow, and the more steadily we improve and exercise our reasoning powers, the more do we furnish ourselves with motives for discarding moral responsibility—and thus man is formed by his Maker, a preposterous compound, with a *conscience* that informs him of his duty, and with an *understanding* that tells him, in proportion as it is cultivated and improved, that his conscience is a mistaken guide. And it is to speculations such as these that the world gives the name of philosophical necessity !

**Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy!
Yet, with a pleasing sorcery, could charm
Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
Fallacious hope, or arm the obdured breast
With stubborn patience, as with triple steel.**

That men should be brought to profess opinions, so contradictory to their own consciousness, to their moral feeling and judgment, and to all their real principles of action, I would by no means impute to a desire of throwing off these restraints, or of maintaining a stubborn and irreligious frame of mind. Much less would I insinuate that the advocates of Calvinism are actuated by such a motive. Many of them we know are lively patterns not only of piety but of moral virtue: and the dreadful heresy of avowed Antinomianism (although if it arise at all it certainly arises out of these doctrines) is so shocking to common sense, and so obviously unscriptural, that it cannot ever prevail long over these counteracting causes. It is in fact extremely rare. But the natural *tendency* of Calvinistic opinions towards it, and to breed a carelessness with regard to moral conduct, not only appears demonstrable by fair reasoning, as in the case of Fatalism already discussed, but is confirmed also by historical testimony.

On the *causes* which appear to me most powerful in producing and keeping alive this dangerous paradox, I shall briefly touch in the conclusion of the present discourse. But I cannot forbear from pointing out in this place, although it may be a partial anticipation of the argument, how close a connection subsists between the whole question of Fatalism and that of Predestination—and how justly we may reason by analogy from one to the other.

The generality of Calvinists when charged with the *consequences* of their opinions, like the Fatalists, answer that we ought to *address* mankind as if their doom were unsettled— as if God were willing that all should be saved—and as if much depended on themselves whether they should obtain salvation or not. And when farther pressed with the *inconsistency* of these opinions they reply, that such exhortations are the *appointed means of perseverance*. Be it so. Then they are means the efficacy of which is increased by turning our eyes away from the truth. For in proportion to the conviction we feel of the truth of the main doctrine, that is, the better we become acquainted, according to them, with the right interpretation of Scripture, and the more we meditate upon it, the weaker do these means become which are the appointed instruments of our salvation. This argument then is not a refutation, like many others, drawn from opinions opposite to theirs: it is involved in their own defence: it is admitted by themselves in the very acknowledgment they make, that we ought in practice to accommodate ourselves to the ordinary belief of mankind upon these subjects, however erroneous; or, in other words, that advancement in the knowledge of truth may obstruct men's salvation.

In comparing the probable effects of Fatalism and of Calvinism upon the conduct of men, an important distinction ought always to be made, which is however very generally overlooked. The doctrines rest indeed on the same basis, but that of Calvinism is practically far more dangerous.

The Fatalist acts in general as other men do. He is not likely to neglect urgent duties, or to endure pain and privation for the sake of an abstract theory. His habits, his interests, his affections, his regard for character and for the opinion of the world, all keep him from being led astray by a speculative absurdity. But whatever security the Calvinist has of this kind is *weakened* by the very nature of his opinions. According to them he suffers *comparatively* nothing by yielding practically to their force: and their force is exerted in *lessening* the motives of a worldly nature which control the other. The instincts, the appetites, and the interests of the Calvinist, may indeed rouse him to action, although in this respect their influence must be weaker than it is with the mere Fatalist; while the worldly restraints upon vicious indulgence are almost entirely removed. For since the effect of those principles which he holds is to take place

after, while the benefit of obeying natural impulse is *immediate*—since the effect of the former is to be *eternal*, while the inconvenience that may attend the latter is *temporary* - any momentary delusion which prompts him to expect pleasure by doing wrong is not only not counteracted, but is encouraged by this persuasion. The quantity of evil which may alloy his pleasure here (and which often comes in aid of virtue by presenting a drawback from the enjoyment) when viewed as a deduction from the sum of happiness which through all eternity will still remain the same, becomes absolutely evanescent.

The chief characteristic in fact of Fatalism, taken apart from Revelation, is its tendency to breed a disregard of *religious* duties, while Calvinism has the same tendency with respect to *moral* duties. The man who looks only to this life, and who believes all events to be already fixed and unalterable, has little inducement to betake himself to prayer, or to the worship of the Deity—while he who looks chiefly to another life, and believes his destiny in that life to be fixed and unalterable, may naturally be careless and indifferent about his conduct here.

Thus it is observed of Tiberius, “Circa Deos et religiones negligentior erat, *quippe* addictus mathematicae, perspasionisque plenus, omnia fato agi.”

The remark is made by a philosophical writer, and addressed to a philosophical age, as an obvious explanation of the irreligious habits of the emperor. *His* religion had little or no relation to a future state. There might be some mixture of this notion with it, as there might be some want of uniform steadiness in his belief of fatality: and therefore his biographer says, not that he absolutely renounced religion, but that he was careless, *negligentior*, about it. As far however as his fatalism operated, it had that effect. And this is all I would urge in the case of the Calvinist. *His* fatality has little or no relation to the present state. It has perhaps as much; as the religion of the emperor had to a future state. As the views of Tiberius then were directed to this life; and because the gods could not affect his interests *here*, he thought little of them—so the Calvinist, whose views are directed to another life, will think little of his moral conduct, because it can have no effect upon his interests *there*. And thus, supposing in each case the absence of counteracting causes, and speaking of the respective opinions only so far as they really operate, it is as natural a conclusion that the Calvinist will be careless about *morals*, as

that the Fatalist will be careless about *religion*.

A most remarkable instance of this tendency occurs in the disputes which arose among some of the earliest sufferers for the Gospel's sake in this country; who were confined in the same prison during the persecution in Queen Mary's reign. Pious and conscientious as they all were, their differences on points of doctrine began with a complaint of the laxity of manners observed in the professors of absolute predestination, which gave offence to the more serious and sober-minded of their fellow-prisoners, as being unsuitable to their afflicted condition, and to the probable approach of death—a censure which the others scornfully rejected, as implying a want of assurance in their final salvation.

[This account is taken from a very curious treatise lately published by Dr. Laurence, from a MS. in the Bodleian Library, entitled, Authentic Documents relative to the Predestination Controversy which took place among those who were imprisoned for their adherence to the doctrines of the Reformation by Queen Mary. Bradford was the advocate for that doctrine which afterwards received the name of Calvinism, and Trewe was a principal person of the opposite persuasion. The "Narrative" of the latter is a highly interesting document, written in a spirit of charity and meekness, and throws much light upon the history of these opinions. Speaking of the origin of the dispute he says, "They did give such occasion of evil and offence to the weak by their using of gaming, that we could do no less but gently admonish them to leave it, and to exhort them after the Scriptures to redeem the time, seeing the days are evil, and to leave such vain things, and to mourn with us, that did mourn for the great misery that is fallen on this land, and for the lamentable perplexity that many of our weak brethren (that were not able to bear the cross) Were in, and to watch and pray continually, and strengthen us and our brethren in his truth to stand, that our lives and deaths might glorify his holy name.

'With the which they were not content, but defended it by the Scriptures, and because we would not give them place, but disproved them by the word, they were somewhat displeased with us ; insomuch that in process of time they began to pick out matter against us, and because we did use abstinence and prayer, they re-ported us to be justifiers of ourselves, and such like ; to the which we answered, that our

justification came by faith in Christ's death and bloodshedding, &c.

'After other talk, in conclusion they did affirm, that none of them that God ordained to be saved could be driven from him by persecution, nor yet by any other occasion or means. For all such as shall be saved (say they) were elect and predestinate thereunto before the foundation of the world was laid, and none of them can be damned, do what wickedness they can, &c.'

When pressed with those passages of Scripture, which denounce God's wrath and damnation against those that willfully sin against him, 'These sentences,' said they, are written to put the elect in fear to do evil, that their lives might glorify their Father which is in heaven, and not to put them in fear of damnation. By this in effect they affirmed those Scriptures to be written in vain, or to put men in fear where no fear is, affirming in effect, that the words of the Holy Ghost doth no more good than a man of clouts with a bow in his hand doth in a corn field, which will keep away the vermin crows awhile, but when they know what it is, they will fall down beside it, and devour the corn without fear.' Compare this last homely illustration with the argument above pursued, pp. 18 and 24, against the Necessarian, and p. 27. against the Calvinist.

Trewe sums up his objections to the doctrine of the Predestinarians in twenty-three propositions, which he calls Enormities. The eighteenth Enormity is, Also it giveth an occasion to neglect prayer, and to leave it altogether except it be for corporal food, raiment, and health of body, and such like, and nothing for the soul, in that it affirmeth contrary to the Scriptures, that all such as were predestinate before the foundation of the world was laid, must of necessity be saved, therefore they need not pray for it, and the residue must of necessity be damned, and prayer will not help them.'

The whole of this curious treatise, together with Dr. Laurence's able Introduction, who employs it to throw light upon the opinions of Cranmer and Ridley, is well deserving the study of those who feel any doubt upon the doctrine of our Established Church in these matters.]

But the analogy between Fatalism and Calvinism, which is the foundation of the whole argument, will be treated of more at large hereafter. For the present, in answer

to the question which naturally arises, how opinions so unreasonable and

extravagant could ever acquire an ascendancy over the human mind, I would account for the paradox, partly from the pride of intellect, refusing to admit the truth of things which it is unable thoroughly to comprehend and to reconcile with one another, although they are each capable of a separate demonstration— but still more from the thralldom in which men's judgments are held by the inaccurate use of language, and from an ignorance of some of the first principles on which language is constructed. It is not suitable to this place, nor would it materially conduce to the purpose I have in view, to track these errors through all the meagre and profitless disquisitions which are employed to support them. It will be sufficient to notice one or two of the most important as specimens of the whole class.

The doctrine of fate and predestination was strenuously maintained by the Stoical school, and we collect from Cicero, in his treatise *De Fato*, what the knot was which tied them down to such unnatural opinions. Every proposition, they said, is either true or false. This is essential to a proposition, and it is universally admitted. Although therefore I may not know which it is, yet that it is one or the other, and that it is so at the time it is uttered, is certain; and my ignorance does not at all affect the certainty of the proposition. Suppose then I say, “such an event will happen next year.” It is at this moment either true or false, because the proposition is now, and when the thing happens, the truth which lay hid in the proposition before is only made apparent then; its nature is not altered. This they called a demonstration, and thought that nobody could deny it, who was not prepared to deny the premiss, “that every proposition is either true or false.” But it is in fact an abuse of the word *true*—the precise meaning of which is “*id quod res est*.” An assertion respecting the *future* therefore is neither true nor false. And if they press us still farther with the nature of proposition, we have only to reply that it is not a proposition, in that sense of the word proposition above explained, and thus their whole argument falls to the ground. Frivolous as the example appears when exhibited in this simple form, yet whole volumes of perplexing metaphysics have been spun out of these flimsy materials.

[The equivocal use of the word true is combined with another error that runs through all the reasoning in that treatise, whether the speaker be

Epicurean or Stoic. There is a confusion of words with things; physical cause is confounded with logical reason—truth with reality—certainty of the mind with certainty of the object. When these equivocations are detected and removed, the whole dispute vanishes into empty air.

*The argument against the contingency of events drawn from the principle, that every proposition is true or false, is put in a great variety of forms in the treatise *De Fato*, especially from chap. 9. to chap. 16. to which I refer the reader; but the sum of the whole is given by Tucker with his usual simplicity and perspicuity in the following passage.*

'Epicurus denied the reality of fate, insisting that many things happened which were absolutely fortuitous: but then he could not get over the argument drawn by his opposers from the certainty of either the affirmative or negative of every proposition that could be uttered concerning what is to come to pass hereafter. If, for instance, Epicurus in his lifetime had said, that on this fourteenth day of January, 1762, it would rain here in the morning and be fair in the afternoon, now the day is ended we may know that he spoke a certain truth: but truth cannot be turned into falsehood by any thing subsequent, therefore it was impossible any other weather should happen than has, because otherwise that might have been rendered false which we know for certain was once true. Neither could the fact contained in a proposition which was true two thousand years ago, become casual ever afterwards; for if it was always to come to pass, as we know it was from the event, it could never have been possible that it should not come to pass; but what was always impossible could never lie under the power of any cause or option of any agent to have effected.' *Light of Nature*, vol. 4. c. 25. §. 23.

Tucker's sagacity leads him indeed to reject this reasoning, with much more to the same purpose, and to detect many of the verbal sophisms involved in it: but the equivocations of true and certain, and the improper use of the word proposition, which are the real key to the riddle, he has not pointed out.

To these examples of what was called "profound reasoning" among ancient philosophers, let me add one on the same subject from a modern writer of great acuteness and ability, the well-known champion of Necessity and Predestination, Jonathan Edwards. I produce it as a curious proof, how vigor of intellect, when once entangled in a snare of words, only tends by its struggles to increase its own embarrassment.

'There must be a certainty in things themselves, before they are certainly known, or, which is the same thing, known to be certain. For certainty of knowledge is nothing else but knowing or discerning the certainty there is in the things themselves, which are known. Therefore there must be a certainty in things to be a ground of certainty of knowledge, and to render things capable of being known to be certain. And this is nothing but the necessity of truth known, or its being impossible but that it should be true ; or, in other words, the firm and infallible connection between the subject and predicate of the proposition that contains that truth. All certainty of knowledge consists in the view of the firmness of that connection. So God's certain foreknowledge of the future existence of any event, his view of the firm and indissoluble connection of the subject and predicate of the proposition that AFFIRMS its FUTURE EXISTENCE.'
:Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, Part II. §. 12.]

A similar example is the use often made of the words *cannot* and *must* as applied to the Almighty—a form of speech bold and irreverent at the best, and if thoroughly examined perfectly absurd. To say that a power which *can* do everything *cannot* do certain things, as, for instance, undo what has been done, or make that contingent which he knows will come to pass, is to contradict one's self. That it is impossible for the same thing *to be* and *not to be* is indisputable. When the meaning of one term of a proposition confessedly implies the negation of the other, it is absurd to dispute about them. Whether life be death, or light be darkness, cannot come into question even among logomachists. And therefore if we mean by the word *contingent*, that which cannot be known beforehand, we only say, that what cannot be known beforehand cannot be known beforehand—which is saying nothing—and therefore nothing is denied of the Deity.

But if the subjects and predicates of two apparently incongruous propositions are not precisely identical—if there be any shadow of difference not merely perceptible but possible in their meaning—although we may be incapable of reconciling their apparent incongruity, or of conceiving in what manner the things denoted by them can co-exist, yet it is palpably absurd, for those who admit the being of a God, to deny the possibility of this co-existence. And if the positive proofs for each assertion are separately unanswerable, reason requires that we should admit them both, without professing to explain the difficulty they involve.

Neither should it excite our surprise, that in words of such common use as *true, possible, certain*, and the like, any ambiguity should exist, or that any process of definition should be necessary to guard against fallacy in the employment of them. While we confine our attention to the ordinary occurrences of life, or to those relations of things with which we are all familiar, no such precision or refinement is required.

The commonest tools need not be made with mathematical exactness. But when we push our enquiries beyond this daily sphere of vision, greater and greater accuracy is requisite in the instruments we employ. The slightest impurities in the atmosphere, a floating atom, or the vibration from a footstep, will interfere with the observations of physical science—and throw us perhaps at once out of our true course

***Ten thousand leagues awry
Into the devious air.***

And when we take upon us to explore the hidden things of God, those vast regions which lie at an immeasurable distance from our ordinary range of thought, can it be surprising if the instruments which serve us well enough here, be found coarse and defective, and that when most perfect they should stand in need of the nicest care in adjusting them, before we can place any confidence in the result? Language is the chief, if not the only medium of all these speculations: add when the conclusions obtained by help of this medium militate against the strongest moral convictions, and the first principles of our nature, is it not reasonable to suspect some inaccuracy in the process, some imperfection in the instruments, or some defect in those organs which are exercised upon objects far beyond the system for which they are principally designed? If indignation be ever justified upon occasions of this kind, it surely is allowable when we hear the name of philosophy applied to errors such as these; when men presume to scan the ways of Omnipotence, and fancy they are fathoming the depths of the mighty ocean, with a line that has not yet measured the soundings of the harbour from whence they set out.

But when these rash enterprises are taken in hand, and the confidence or the apparent skill and intrepidity of the leader draw many followers after him, it becomes a Christian duty to point out the dangers of the way, the diligent preparation it requires, or the mistaken views in which the plan originates. Metaphysical discussion then becomes valuable, like

every other talent, according to the use made of it. And that use surely is not inconsiderable, if, though it may not add to the stock of knowledge, it yet serves to keep us in possession of what is already known—if, to use the language of an eloquent writer as well as a most accurate and judicious reasoner, ‘it repairs the damage itself had occasioned—like the spear of Achilles, healing the wounds it had made before—if it casts no additional light on the paths of life, but disperses the clouds with which it had overspread them—if it advances not the traveler one step on his journey, but conducts him back again to the spot from whence he had wandered.’

There yet remain some points to be examined in the argument concerning God’s dealings with man, and the freedom and responsibility of man, regarding only the present life, before we shall be prepared to transfer the same method of reasoning to those analogous difficulties which have been started from the language of Scripture, and the removal of which is the ultimate aim of the enquiry thus begun: but the consideration of these must be made the subject of another discourse.

Note to p. 6.

Acknowledge the two things to have no connection.] Edwards in his work on the Freedom of the Will dwells much upon the distinction between *making* the event necessary, and *proving* it to be necessary. Whether prescience,’ he says, be the thing that *makes* the event necessary or no, it alters not the case. Infallible foreknowledge may *prove* the necessity of the event foreknown, and yet not be the thing that *causes* the necessity.’ Part ii. sect. 12. But infallible foreknowledge, while it remains foreknowledge, *proves* nothing. When the being which possesses this foreknowledge *declares* that a thing will come to pass, that declaration indeed proves, or is a certain ground of assurance to us, that it *will* come to pass. Even then it does not prove the *event to be necessary*.

This is an example of the same error which pervades the Stoical argument above mentioned, in the treatise De Fato—i. e. confounding *words* with *things* One proposition may be a necessary consequence from another proposition: but the thing denoted by it is not therefore necessary. Indeed the slightest reflection seems to be sufficient to inform us that the nature of things cannot be affected by anything we say, or think, or know, or reason about them. All these operations are relative to

our own perceptions, and can have no influence on the objects of those perceptions; which must ever be what they are, whether we reason about them or not.

If however the question be regarded as merely logical, namely, whether the very term *foreknowledge* does not imply a necessity in the thing foreknown, it must be decided by the established use of words. That such is not the received definition of the term may, I believe, be with confidence asserted: and the confusion, whenever it does prevail, seems to arise from the following cause. We may be unable to conceive how a thing not necessary in its nature can be foreknown—for *our* foreknowledge is in general limited by that circumstance, and is more or less perfect in proportion to the fixed or necessary nature of the things we contemplate—with which nature we become acquainted by experience, and are thus able to anticipate a great variety of events: but to subject the knowledge of God to any such limitation is surely absurd and unphilosophical as well as impious: and therefore to mix up the idea of God's foreknowledge with any quality in the nature of the things foreknown, is even less excuseable than to be guilty of that confusion when speaking of ourselves.

DISCOURSE 2:

DEUT. 8:5.

THOU SHALT ALSO CONSIDER IN THINE HEART, THAT AS A MAN
CHASTENETH HIS SON, SO THE LORD THY GOD CHASTENETH
THEE.

THE point which I endeavoured to establish in my last discourse was, that a belief in the absolute necessity of events, physical as well as moral, was not only repugnant to our natural and unsophisticated judgments, but that upon taking an attentive view of human nature, it was found to be contradictory and inconsistent with itself. For that in proportion as the belief obtained, all our active principles would become useless, and our moral principles destroyed—and that since the Necessarian himself allowed that to effect this belief considerable exercise and improvement of reason was required, his theory involved this absurdity, that in exact proportion as our understandings were

strengthened and improved, all the ends and purposes of our being would be counteracted.

That man should be so formed, as to discover truths, which militate against the very end for which he is formed, is in itself revolting to common sense: and if we pursue the enquiry, we shall find that all *experience* is against it also—that whatever we have the natural means of discovering always is or may be, valuable to us when discovered. Thus the knowledge of facts in the remotest regions of nature which art and science combined are forever bringing to light, invariably tend sooner or later to some human use— and the subtlest and most remote often to the greatest uses. Thus too the knowledge of those *general laws*, which our natural powers rightly directed enable us to acquire, serves many important purposes of life—as, for instance, “that we must all die once”—but the *particular moment* of each man’s death, a point which would obviously interfere with all our proper business and interests, although there may be a natural curiosity to know it, yet there are no *natural* means of acquiring that knowledge—and accordingly we find that for such a purpose recourse is had to *supernatural* means—omens, incantations, and all the absurdities of astrology and magic, by which the credulity of mankind has been abused. Although in this respect at least the proceeding is more rational than the creed of the Necessarian, inasmuch as the enquiring party implies that we must go *out of* nature to seek for that, which is so abhorrent to the very constitution of nature itself.

The next difficulty which I suppose may be objected to the opinions we maintain is, that they are inconsistent with the language habitually employed by religious men to denote their sense of the supernatural agency exerted in the world. It is an undeniable fact, that in all ages and under all forms of religion (setting aside for the present the doctrines of Revelation) serious and good men have regarded the events of this life as subject to the control of divine Providence— that they have talked of the folly and conceit of mankind in supposing that *their* wisdom, *their* foresight, *their* power and contrivance, brought about the great or good things which happen—and though the men who make these reflections have had their hopes and fears, and taken their full share in planning and executing measures with a view to such events, yet after the event is

passed, or even before it comes, in their graver and more contemplative hours they admit, that it is God's will alone to which the whole is owing—and that all things have conspired to the furtherance of some great plan of his, which has either served to promote the happiness of men, or to illustrate his own transcendent excellence.

Where then, it may be said, is the consistency of all this? Either they do not, while they are acting, think as they do when truth forces these reflections from them, or if they do, it is a proof that men may believe in a superior power bearing onward with a steady and irresistible course, and yet act in concurrence with that power, just as if the issue depended on themselves. Now as to the first of these suppositions, it may be admitted without scruple, that men do, while they are engaged in action, think more of their immediate business, than of the share the power above them takes in the same process—and that in calmer and more leisurely hours, the impression of that supreme influence returns upon the mind with increased force, as some sound which in the stillness of the night fills the air, yet is lost or unperceived amidst the several discords and noises, of a busy day. But the position can never be conceded, that the belief of this controlling power is contradictory to the belief of the freedom of human actions. For in the first place it does not follow that because we believe this power to be exercised, therefore it is exercised to the exclusion of all other influence. And again, it may be, (to speak in a manner adapted to human conceptions and human experience,) it may be kept in reserve to act upon occasions; it may form the *plan* and the *outline*, and delegate the subordinate parts to minor agents; it may, for the purpose of exercising the fidelity and zeal of those agents, one while keep itself out of sight; or at another, to animate their exertions, let them perceive its presence; or, to check their folly and presumption, make them feel their dependence, and frustrate their endeavours—it may, supposing these agents to have a will of their own, incline that will to act conformably to their duty, by making that duty appear easy and agreeable, by removing obstacles and terrors, and placing attractive objects in their way; or if the will be stubborn, it may make it feel the ill consequences of that stubbornness, and it may contrive that its perverseness shall defeat its own purpose, and forward some other purpose which is kind and beneficial: it may make the misconduct of one instrumental to his own correction, or to the improvement and fidelity of

the rest, by shewing, in ordinary cases of disobedience, the evil he brings upon himself—or in cases of extreme depravity, the utter abandonment and ruin to which the delinquent is left.

Does any part of such a scheme either detract from the notion of a supreme intelligence planning, governing, guiding, and accomplishing the whole? or can such a conception in the mind of man of the scheme of divine Providence tend to relax his energy, to discourage his industry, to impair the distinctions of right and wrong, or weaken the principle of duty and obedience?

The only argument brought against it is borrowed from the difficulty of accounting for *evil* as mixed with God's creation, and of conceiving free-will in his creatures. But *difficulties* can never be listened to against the evidence of facts. The fact of the existence of evil no one denies—and the existence of free-will is, by the concurrent unreflecting testimony of all mankind admitted to be a fact, opposed only by the metaphysical objections of a few. That all mankind act, speak, and think, as if the will were free, is admitted by these few themselves. And I trust it may be regarded as proved, that to think otherwise would deprive us of all motives to action, and all sense of right and wrong. It is only because they cannot conceive *how* these two things can co-exist, that they call upon us to surrender our consciousness, our activity, and our moral principles.

Some endeavor was made in the preceding discourse to prove the absurdity of calling that impossible with God, which appeared irreconcilable to ourselves. When there is a palpable contradiction in terms, so that one part of the proposed idea negatives the other, the thing may be called impossible: although in this case it would be more correct and more safe to use the word *contradictory* than impossible: because it is with us—with our mode of speaking and combining ideas—that the difficulty both begins and ends: the power of God is not denied or limited by these negations. Thus if I were called upon to make a circle whose radii should be unequal, or whose diameter should be one-fourth of the circumference, it would argue no want of *power* in me not to do it; and to call it a *self-contradiction* would be more strictly proper than to say that it was *impossible*. In a simple instance of this sort we readily discern that there is nothing in reality proposed to be done: but we might go on requiring conditions equally destructive of the essence of the thing, and

yet not so *manifest* as this—involving a denial of some more hidden properties, relative to triangles or squares or ellipses, or properties which are only elicited by a very complex combination of the circle with other figures. There is in fact no end to such possible relations and combinations; and yet in any case, if there be an impossibility involved in the very terms of the problem, as there often is through the ignorance of him who proposes it, to many an unlearned person it might seem as if limits were assigned to my power, whereas it would be more proper to say, that the problem itself has no meaning.

Now if we consider how small a part of God's works, both in extent and in duration, our faculties can embrace, and further, how intimately and variously connected all the parts of those works are, plainly indicating one scheme, of which the remotest parts have numerous and complicated relations with each other, so that much of what we see is essential to what we do not see, and to suppose, one without the other would be a contradiction in terms as literal, though not so palpable, as a circle with unequal radii— when, I say, all our enquiries into nature only tend to impress upon our minds this wonderful concatenation—and when, again, a scheme perfectly analogous to this has been traced in the *moral* world, insomuch that in the history of mankind there is no one event, however trivial, but may have intimate and essential connections with all other events, however grand and important; and these connections may run out into all possible combinations, and multiply to all infinity—when, I say, we reflect on all this, he must indeed be a rash and vain reasoner, who does not admit the *probability* that all his own perplexities arise from imperfect acquaintance with the objects of his speculation—and that where facts militate against his reasonings, some impossible condition was involved in his own expectations— something destructive of the very essence of that thing which was the main object of his thoughts.

And thus we may conclude with regard to all questions in which the infinite power of God is represented as being irreconcilable with something that either is, or is alleged to be—that unless an actual contradiction can be pointed out in the terms of the proposition, no difficulties can justify a denial of its possibility—and on the other hand, that many of those things which fill us with difficulty to account for, are necessary conditions to other things the existence of which we assume,

and could not without involving a contradiction have been otherwise. So that what we first thought to be *impossibilities*, turn out to be only *difficulties*—and, on the other hand, many of the *difficulties* which perplex us in the scheme of Providence are such, that the removal of them, keeping other things as they are, would be an *impossibility*.

Let us return then to the consideration of the actual scheme of God's providence on earth, as we learn it by experience; and see whether by attributing to men the power of choice, and regarding them as in a great measure working out their own happiness or misery, we do at all derogate from the sovereignty and active providence of God, or say anything inconsistent with the first principles of religion—that he knows all things—that he made all things—that he governs all things—that he wills the happiness of his creatures—and that for his glory they are and were created.

Now one of the first characteristics of this scheme is, that we are placed in a state of *trial*, and that we feel good and evil, pain and pleasure, to be the natural consequences of our actions—that we soon find our respective interests depend greatly upon our conduct—and that, generally speaking, virtue and industry is rewarded, vice and laziness punished, in this life. We see however that this scheme is carried on, not by single and insulated acts, but by *general*, which are such that our faculties soon enable us to comprehend them, and so to anticipate in a great degree the consequences of our actions. We readily perceive also how well this constitution of things accords with the design of making us joint workers and instruments in effecting our own fortune: since, if there were no *system* according to which events appeared generally to fall out, there would be no room for judgment, or prudence, or skill—nothing to determine our conduct beforehand, or to afford the means of acquiring any future good, or guarding against evil.

Yet, on the other hand, if everything fell out *precisely* in a way that might be foreseen, if good conduct were invariably followed with success, and the degree of reward exactly apportioned in every case to the virtue, and of punishment to the vice, of the party—if this order were constant, and perceptible, and certain, the main purpose which we have been supposing, that of disciplining a free and a moral agent by a course of trial, would be much counteracted. As without *evil* in the world, actual or

possible, we cannot conceive any *tried*, so, if an exact and immediate requital were awarded in every instance to our actions, there would be no exercise for many of those qualities which are constituent parts of our moral nature. Under such a system life would be nothing more than a prudent calculation: selfishness might take the place of virtue; and the principle of fidelity and duty would have no scope. As without the presence of danger it is not easy to conceive any proof of courage, or of temperance without lust, or of obedience without temptation to *do* wrong, so there is no room for the exercise of forbearance, forgiveness, and generosity, without *suffering* wrong. Without pain and privation there can be no patience—without distress in others, no sympathy in ourselves—no occasion for pity, for relief, for succor, for consolation, for any of those acts of love and charity, which are perhaps the most efficacious towards our own improvement, and towards fitting us for the enjoyment of a higher state of being. And though we presume not to say how much or how little of these modes of trial may be requisite for the perfection of our nature, yet reason at once informs us, that without such trial the principles of our nature would have no exercise; and therefore that some temporary deviations from the general law of equity are essential to the discipline and probation of a being constituted as man is. To suppose that kind of moral excellence, which leads to higher and higher degrees of happiness, to be attainable without previous trial, may, for aught we know, be as absurd as to suppose a circle with unequal radii: and to suppose *trial* without *evil* seems to be equally absurd. Wherefore all objections to such a proceeding, as derogatory from the power and goodness of God, resolve ultimately into an assumption, that to make anything not thoroughly perfect and thoroughly happy at once, or, in short, to make any variety in his creation, is unworthy of him.

Let us proceed then with the examination of that scheme of things which actually is, and which the more we examine it, the more is it found to be adapted to our nature, and to the supposed design of God.

As creatures of God, and acting under his superintendence, our reason informs us, that to maintain an intercourse with him and to preserve a sense of our dependence upon him, must be a part of our business here. Prayer and meditation on his attributes are the obvious means of effecting this—and accordingly it is a universal practice, wherever any

sense of religion is entertained among men. In the mode of preferring their petitions, as well as in the things they pray for, a thousand differences and a thousand errors prevail: but in all cases the act itself implies a belief that the Deity is not inflexible, and that things are not absolutely so determined as to render our supplication fruitless. We suppose indeed that the government of God is carried on by general laws: and therefore prayer should always be accompanied with a disposition to acquiesce humbly in a refusal, on the ground that our petition might have interfered with *the* good of others or of ourselves. But that system of laws by which the world is governed is not understood to be so fixed, as that to pray for any modification of it should be improper—nor yet, on the other hand, is it reasonable to expect that this system should bend and yield according to the particular wants of each individual. The good that each of us derives from the *regular* operation of the general system ought certainly to be acknowledged as flowing from the author of that system: but as man is prone to overlook what is settled and familiar, and to be affected in a more lively way by what is *occasional*, and by what seems to have an especial reference to himself, a gracious provision is made for the preservation of this sense of dependence on God, by the need which is continually felt of recurring to his protection and indulgence.

This habit however is also liable to *its* perversion and abuse. And accordingly we find that ignorant or sanguine people are perpetually interpreting the occurrences of life as special marks of divine favour or displeasure. When applied to the success or the misfortune of others, nothing can be more reprehensible or more unchristian than this practice—and though less pernicious in our own case, yet since it breeds a narrow notion of God's providence, and borders close both upon presumption and superstition, there is often need of correcting and chastening it, by turning men's attention to the settled order of things, by which these events may be accounted for without the aid of any particular interference of divine power. In proportion as the understanding is cultivated, and our knowledge enlarged, these false impressions are corrected, and a more sober and rational sense of religion succeeds to them.

Let not the Necessarian attempt to retort on us the argument already employed in refutation of his scheme, namely, that if the more we know

of nature the less prone we are to interpret natural events as particular acts of Providence, then *we* also admit, that in proportion as reason is cultivated our natural judgments are counteracted. The two cases are widely different. In *his* case it is not sudden and early *impressions* that are required to give way to a more abstract and philosophical view of things, but our gravest and most deliberate *judgments*, the foundation of all our plans and proceedings in life, of all our motives to action, and of all our moral discipline. In the case of the untutored Indian, who

Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind,

or of the peasant, who interprets every natural event which at all affects his interest as specially designed for that purpose, it is not his *deliberate judgment*, but his *first impressions*, which subsequent knowledge counteracts. Those impressions, although they bring with them a lively sense of God's power, yet often, as we have observed, lead to evil; and the reasoning which controls them opens to the mind at the same time a larger view of this very providence; thus substituting a calm and serious conviction, in place of an irregular and desultory feeling: so that religion may be said to gain rather than lose by the process of correction.

But to proceed with our main argument.

Precisely analogous to God's dealings in dispensing the good things of life, and to that method by which a sense of our dependence on him for the enjoyment of these blessings is kept alive in us, is the communication also of that unseen influence upon the mind, which good and pious men desire, and the belief of which even under the guidance of the light of nature was very general. "That every good and every perfect gift is from above," is a sentiment not *introduced* but *adopted* by an Apostle of Christ. It occasionally breaks through the gloom of the philosophy and the religion of the heathen world: and the sublimer strains of their poetry speak the same language. That God favours those who yield to his influence— but that he rejects and abandons or drives on headlong to their ruin men who resist his will—are frequent exclamations of those who contemplate with an awful wonder his moral government of the universe. That these wicked and rebellious men, when they fancy they are pursuing their own schemes, are baffled and foiled, and made subservient to those very purposes which they endeavour to defeat—that they are

raised aloft in order to render their fall more exemplary—that they are flattered for a time with the apparent success of their iniquity, in order that the punishment when it comes may be more heavy and more instructive— these are reflections which cannot be new to any who are conversant with the ancient heathen writers; and they accord also with those occasional impressions which the passing events of life or the records of history make upon all serious minds.

It is not till they involve themselves in metaphysical perplexities, that men regard these things as incompatible with the acknowledged attributes of God, or with the free will of man. But when once they begin to enquire whether the world might not have been constructed otherwise, whether evil might not have been dispensed with, whether what God foreknew can be said to proceed from the free will of man, and whether he must not be understood as having preordained every occurrence however minute or however iniquitous which takes place in the world, it is no wonder that their enquiries should be lost in endless mazes, or in a denial of something which it is as necessary to admit as any other proposition which they think proper to retain.

If however these difficulties are traced up to some fundamental positions, that are not *contradictory*, but whose existence is only *inconceivable* to our faculties, if each of these positions must be separately admitted, although their union is mysterious and unaccountable, it is not *adding* to the difficulty, it is a natural and probable conclusion, that many *consequences* from each of those fundamental positions separately taken should be deducible, which are no more reconcileable with each other in our apprehensions, than the original truths are from which they are derived. To dwell upon these subordinate truths, these consequences of the original positions, to set them in array against each other, to represent him who holds the one side as necessarily contradicting the other, and to demand an explicit disavowal of every tenet connected with the one, before we will acknowledge that a man really believes the other, is the sure way to perpetuate strife, and to defeat the practical good which may be derived from both opinions. If that God made everything, knowing beforehand all that would come to pass and all that men would do, be an undeniable truth— if nevertheless he deals with man as if he were free to act, and rewards and punishes him according to this trial—

and we cannot *comprehend how* both these things should be true together, we yet can *believe* them both *to be* true, and so believing, we may well conclude that many of our occasional reasonings concerning these things must be infected with the same apparent incongruity that strikes us in the enunciation of those first principles. We ought not to wonder at these difficulties; we ought rather to expect them. Strife must be endless, if we are not to rest till they are all explained and harmonized: and error, not truth, will prevail, if either position be so established as to exclude the other. Let us however carefully bear in mind that these are not *contradictions* but *apparent incongruities*—and the same answer which we give to those who press us with the *main* difficulty, must in all reason be allowed to cover these also.

In such a state of things, however, reason as well as charity requires that we should give to each doctrine that form and complexion which is least hostile and inconsistent with the other, seeking rather to soften discrepancies, and to approximate if we cannot identify opinions, instead of assuming that tone of challenge and defiance, which implies that there is no difficulty to be overcome; and that he who will not renounce the one, is justly chargeable with all the pernicious consequences involved in a denial of the other. There may be truths, as there are mathematical lines, which must ever approach, although to the comprehension of a finite being they will never coincide. Such questions then, which by their very nature cannot admit of a perfect solution, should never be started as proper objects of human investigation. They may be resorted to by the sophist as an inexhaustible storehouse of wrangling and controversy; but he who values discussion only as it tends to elucidate truth, will turn away from that which ministers only debate, satisfied with the possession of those undoubted truths, without which his own existence is a still greater mystery than the deepest of all these perplexing speculations.

From this point then the transition is easy to the consideration of those *analogous* difficulties in the doctrine of revelation, which have so often divided the Christian world. If the scheme of revelation, as has been admirably explained by Bishop Butler, bears a close analogy to the scheme of God's natural government, so that the characteristics of the one correspond in all leading points with the system of the other—if the difficulties of revealed religion are no greater and no other than what we

might, from a contemplation of the course and constitution of nature, have reasonably expected to find in it—thus confirming instead of weakening, the conviction of their common origin—we shall of course be prepared to find each of those doctrines now considered, which our natural reason has collected from the study of the world around us, plainly and explicitly set forth in that volume which professes to lead us onward to another world. The book of God's *words* speaks a plainer language, but not a contradictory language to the book of God's *works*. He has bountifully bestowed upon us in this life, chequered as it is, gifts and blessings to animate our hopes and to reward our obedience: but he bids us receive them as flowing from his free grace—as no man's right, though they be every man's hope—as objects of prayer to him, no less than of exertion in themselves—and he would have us still awfully regard him as knowing from all eternity whatever has been, is, or will be.

In the dispensation, therefore, of those greater gifts and better promises which his *written word* has made known to mankind, we cannot but expect, that the same assertion of universal sovereignty, of absolute knowledge, and unbounded power, extending to all that we now do or shall do hereafter, would frequently be made. It is the seal of revelation set to one of the earliest conclusions of human reason. But we must also expect, that as in the *natural world* the trial of our virtue is apparently the main object, and the dispensations of Providence seem to be especially designed to make us feel how much depends upon ourselves in this state of earthly discipline, so the trial of our faith should be set forth *in Scripture* as one grand purpose of our present being—that the more God has done for us, the more we should be called upon to do for ourselves—that if to secure his temporal blessings, virtue and prudence and industry are demanded on our part, still more to render ourselves capable of this glorious reward, we should be exhorted to lay aside every sin, and to labour in every branch of duty with redoubled diligence—that if in the course of human affairs, men are wont to be disheartened by adversity and by the success of wicked men, insomuch that their belief in an overruling Providence is apt to be shaken or impaired, so in those severer trials which assail a Christian, still stronger and more distinct assurances of support should be given, still plainer declarations that God's purpose cannot ultimately be foiled by any powers of darkness—that he will not

forsake his elect—but that he will comfort and cheer them through all the perils and hardships of their earthly pilgrimage. Lastly, if the *general laws of the creation* be not so propounded to us here, as to encourage negligence or presumption, but to awaken a lively sense of our dependence upon God, and of the necessity of prayer to him for the continuance of his blessings—so we might well expect that the course of a Christian would in his *written word* be represented as anxious though full of hope—as liable to be stopped or turned aside or even frustrated by temptation—as needing a perpetual renewal of God’s assisting grace, and a careful improvement of all those means of grace, which, if they shall appear to have been bestowed upon us in vain, will certainly be regarded as aggravating the guilt of sin, and will increase our condemnation.

DISCOURSE 3:

ACTS 2:23.

HIM, BEING DELIVERED BY THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND
FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD, YE HAVE TAKEN, AND BY WICKED
HANDS HAVE CRUCIFIED AND SLAIN.

It has been my endeavour in two former discourses to demonstrate that the doctrine of philosophical necessity is not only at variance with the evidence of consciousness, but that it contradicts the soundest conclusions of human reason; and that the common arguments by which men are driven to allow it, originate partly in an equivocal use of words, and partly in a fallacious assumption that when we are unable to *account for* the co-existence of two propositions, one or other of those propositions must be false.

We do not deny that the attribute of foreknowledge in the Deity makes it difficult to conceive how men can be regarded by him as free and accountable agents—nor again that the doctrine of an overruling Providence, which ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, is hard to be reconciled with the apparent contingency of events and the freedom of human actions—and with all those other subordinate truths necessarily involved in these principles; as, for instance, the duty of prudence, vigilance, and activity in ourselves, of advice, entreaty, warning, exhortation, and command to others, and, above all, with the duty of earnest prayer to God: nor is it easy to conceive how praise and blame can attach to conduct not only *foreseen* by the Almighty, but continually represented to us as *ordained* and *appointed* by his will.

If, however, we set ourselves to examine each of these abstract positions separately from the other, dark and perplexing as the enquiry often is, yet the arguments deducible from reason and experience, alternately in their favour, appear to be irresistible: and as one of the most candid enquirers observes, 'What flashes of light break out from time to time, present the image of truth on opposite sides.' Why then should not truth itself be really an inmate of each opinion? Unless it can be shewn, which never has yet been shewn, that the two opinions are *contradictory* to each other. That they are contradictory has been tacitly assumed, because to us their union is inexplicable: and hence the most

pernicious errors of different kinds have at times prevailed—some denying or doubting the agency of Providence—others the freedom of the human will.

True it is, that besides these difficulties, originally inherent in the subject itself, men superadd others of their own creation: all of which will, I believe, upon a patient and impartial investigation, be found to arise from latent ambiguities in the language employed—ambiguities which impose upon us more easily in proportion as the words in which they occur are of familiar use, and thus pass along without exciting attention, or awakening the slightest degree of suspicion. Men dig too deep for a solution which lies upon the very surface; and after straining their faculties in vain to comprehend what they thus render perplexed for themselves, are unwilling to suppose that some humbler enquirer after truth has by a simple expedient unraveled the whole mystery.

One example has already been produced in the word *certainty*, which properly relates to the *mind* which thinks, and is improperly transferred to the *object* about which it is thinking. However convenient this transference of the term may be in common life, it leads to the most erroneous conclusions in abstract reasoning: and the further adoption of a term as opposed to it, for the purpose of denoting another class of events, viz. *contingent*, has contributed to fix the error. The same may be said of the term *probable*, which is frequently used as if it denoted some quality in the events themselves, whereas it is merely relative, like *certain* and *contingent*, to the human mind, and is expressive of the manner in which we stand affected by such and such objects.

Another important example of the same kind is in the use of the words *possible*, and *impossible*. These are equally ambiguous with the others, as being applied sometimes to events themselves, and sometimes used with reference to our conceptions of them— but of these it is observable that *their primary* and proper application is to events, *their secondary* and improper to the human mind. Thus we say that a thing is possible to a man who has the *power* of doing it—and that is properly *impossible* which no power we are acquainted with can effect. But the words are also continually used to express *our sense* of the chance there is that a thing will be done. When we mean to express our firm conviction that a thing will not happen, although there are *powers* in nature competent to

produce it, we call it impossible, in direct opposition to those things which we are convinced *will* happen, and which we call certain. And thus there are many things which in one sense are *possible*, that is, within the compass of human agency, which again according to our conviction are absolutely *impossible*. In this latter sense the terms possible and impossible are used to denote the two extremes of the scale of probability—possible being the faintest degree of probability, and that which exceeds the utmost bounds of credibility being habitually pronounced impossible. This distinction is sometimes expressed by the words *physical and moral* impossibility, a distinction to which I would not object, provided it be understood not as marking two *kinds* of impossibility, but merely two *senses* in which the word is employed.

There is however a third sense in which we are apt to use the word, and which has led to much confusion in speculations of this nature, that is, when we use it for *inconsistent* or *contradictory*: and it was before observed, that in speaking of the Almighty it would be more safe as well as more decent to employ this language than the word *impossible*. The whole difficulty is then declared to lie, where it really does lie, not in the things, but in the notions we form, or in the words by which we express them : and any statement or description of which one part is shewn to be destructive of another is immediately admitted by every rational mind to have no meaning. In this manner, I endeavoured to prove that most of those speculative difficulties which perplex men's minds, about divine prescience, providence, free-will, and the origin of evil, turn out to be disputes concerning the signification of words; one party choosing to employ the word about which the dispute turns in a sense *exclusive* of some idea which the other regards as *compatible* with it, and which the first party allows to be in itself a probable and reasonable supposition, hard to be denied or disbelieved, and which nothing but the shackles he has imposed upon himself by this arbitrary definition of a term prevents him from admitting.

The author of the *Light of Nature*, in the chapter before quoted, has stated the case of the controversy about Providence and Freewill in a manner perfectly accordant with the view here taken of such disputes. Nothing can be clearer or more precise to those who are acquainted with the technical terms employed ; and as his statement of the question is

concise, it may not be amiss to produce it in his own words.

'An universal providence disposing all events without exception, leaves no room for freedom. But there is such a providence, therefore no freedom: or on the other side, there is a freedom of the will, therefore no such providence. Thus both parties lay down the same major, without which they would make no scruple to admit the minor assumed by their antagonists. But the most sober and considerate part of mankind, induced by the strong evidences both of freedom and providence, have forborne to pronounce them incompatible, *the only obstacle against the reception of either*: yet look upon their consistency as one of those mysteries which we are forced to admit though we cannot explain.'

Both parties, he observes, remain safe while they keep within their own trenches; and alternately each opinion has become predominant in certain times or countries, to the prejudice if not to the entire suppression of the other—thus evincing to every impartial observer that there is an intrinsic vigour in each, which enables it, however obscured for a time, to rise again in its original splendour, and that each has a solid foundation in truth and nature.

To assume then the inconsistency of these two things, or, in other words, to attach that meaning to the word foreknowledge, or providence, which shall *exclude* the notion of freedom in the will or the actions of man, is surely an unreasonable as well as an arrogant practice. In reasoning it is precisely that error which is called, *begging the question*—and when viewed in a moral or a religious light, what can be more reprehensible, what more unworthy of the humility and veneration which is due from man to God, than to impose arbitrary rules of speaking which tend to obliterate one of the fundamental truths which the Creator has implanted in the very constitution of our being ?

If our reason then directs us to acquiesce in this belief as supported by the strongest evidence which the light of nature affords, we might well expect that the revealed word of God would not leave *either of these truths* to be overpowered and kept down by the other, but would assert them each with additional evidence and authority. In proportion as Scripture contains more direct information of the divine nature and attributes than unassisted reason can supply, it is reasonable to presume that the supreme power of the Creator and his concern for the welfare of his

creatures would be there still more unequivocally proclaimed than they are in the works of nature : and again, inasmuch as its object is to regulate and instruct man in his duty towards God, we might well expect that it would recognize still more explicitly the freedom of that will which is to be moulded and regulated so as may best please his Maker, and conduce to his own final happiness.

That such is the *fact* the very mode of carrying on the controversy sufficiently proves: for there is an abundant supply of texts which unquestionably contain each doctrine; but between the scriptural and the philosophical disputants there is this material difference—that whereas in philosophy free-will has been pressed against the doctrine of providence, almost as much as providence against that of free-will, yet when the parties take their stand upon scriptural ground, it is only the advocate for predestination that ever contends *directly* against the opinion of his adversary—the advocate for free-will never pretending to derogate from the foreknowledge or the superintendence of God, but being charged only by his opponent with holding opinions that must draw that consequence after them.

Occasionally indeed the zeal of eager disputants has led them to reason against the Calvinistic doctrines in such terms, as to be inconsistent with the acknowledgment of those doctrines in any sense; not understanding, or not bearing in mind, that the words *knowledge, counsel, will, predestination, decree*, are applied to the Almighty only in an analogical sense—that they are borrowed from human affairs, and employed when speaking of divine things as imperfect expressions—as suitable only in the way of comparison or resemblance—as helping us to form some conceptions, however inadequate, of God's adorable perfections—yet as fully sufficient to *instruct us* how we ought to think and act towards him, which is their principal end and meaning.

This fault however is not common, at least not with the writers of our own Church. It is with the Predestinarian then that our business chiefly lies; and we complain that he unwarrantably interprets those passages of Scripture which declare that things happen from the appointment and the ordinance of God, from his *purpose*, his *counsel*, his *will*, as if mankind were not at liberty to do otherwise than they have done—and as if he punished them for those acts which he designed they should commit, and

the commission of which it was not in their power to avoid.

Some writers indeed of the Calvinistic school have gone so far as to declare, that the fall of man was decreed by God in order to bring in the gracious scheme of redemption—that the sin therefore of our first parents was part of the original purpose and counsel which he had from all eternity—to which form of Calvinism the epithet of *Supralapsarian* has been applied. But others, and by far the majority in modern times, disclaim this tenet in the strongest terms. To represent God as the author of sin they regard as blasphemous in the highest degree: and it is with pleasure I quote the words of one of their most pious and temperate writers to the same effect; ‘God is not the author of sin. A Calvinist who says so I regard as Judas, and will have no communion with him.’

Heartily as I concur with the sentiment here expressed, yet it does not immediately appear why the same reserve for the honour of God and for his *will* expressly revealed in other passages of Scripture, should not equally be made in the interpretation of those texts which they produce as proofs, that God has foreordained, long before the fall, certain individuals only to be saved— that he sent his Son into the world only for these chosen few, 'who are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will'—and that the eternal happiness or misery of men is the consequence of his absolute decree passed before they were born, even from all eternity.

That God created all things and all men, knowing the minutest point of every man's future conduct, is universally admitted.

'The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil [Prov. 16:4].'

Yet we acknowledge that the wickedness of these men must not be imputed to God as its author; and however inconceivable the congruity of the two assertions may be, we are all ready to exclaim with the apostle, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar,' rather than do violence to this fundamental principle. Why then must we be tied down to understand those declarations of God's purpose and will, his foreordained dispensations, his appointments and ordinances, with which the Scripture abounds, as if they laid a restraint upon human liberty? or as if they meant anything more than that God foresaw how men would act, and adapted his proceedings in such a manner as to accomplish his gracious purposes even in spite of their wickedness? How to reconcile this *foreknowledge* with the *moral probation* of man, we are ready to admit, is not within the reach of our faculties: but all are agreed that each fact separately taken is distinctly announced in the word of God.

That *evil* exists, and that God is not the author of it, although the author of everything else, undoubtedly carries with it as great a difficulty as the other question we were considering. We readily perceive that this difficulty arises out of the nature of a *created responsible free agent*, an anomaly among all the objects of our understanding which we can never hope thoroughly to comprehend. We cannot indeed conceive how a being who *knows* all things that will come to pass, should subject another being of his own creating to *trial* - that he should expose this being to

temptation, *knowing* what the issue will be, and yet speak to him before and treat him afterwards as if he did *not* know it. But, admitting this, it is not *contradictory* to reason, it is *agreeable* to it, and what we might naturally expect, that all the declarations concerning this singular object, should involve in them more or less of that difficulty which resides in the very notion itself; and in proportion as they relate more nearly to that part of man's nature which is thus peculiar and inexplicable, that the difficulty of explaining them by comparison with other things should be increased.

There is nothing in nature which stands in the same relation to us which a *moral free agent* bears to his Creator; and accordingly all the language we employ to denote this relation, being borrowed from our own relation to the things around us, must be partial and imperfect expressions, never comprehending at once the whole of this complex idea, but exhibiting that portion of it which best accords with the occasion or with the object principally intended—at one time using the comparison of the potter and his clay, to assert God's absolute creative power and disposing providence—at another representing him as exhorting, arguing, expostulating, striving with his creatures, vexed at their perverseness, anxious for their restoration, affording them the means of return, grieved at their neglect of him, and rejoicing in their recovery. To oppose these passages in hostile array one against the other, has not the slightest tendency to resolve the question. They are all just what by the very nature of the question we might expect to find in Scripture. Even the Deist, who admits the doctrine of a Providence and of Free-will, having accustomed His mind to acquiesce in the mysterious truth, has no pretence for objecting to the *analogous* difficulties involved in the language of Scripture—much less should the sincere and devout Christian be offended at these difficulties, or presumptuously attempt to establish one point by weakening the other. On the contrary, as we have frequently observed, and as the excellent author of the *Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed* demonstrates in full detail, *these very circumstances* are evidence in favour of Revelation, and ought to dispose our minds to receive it—for if either of the doctrines in question were absent, or so stated as to be destructive of the other, Revelation would offer much greater violence to our intellectual faculties than it now does,

and would contradict many conclusions which to our natural reason appear most certain.

[‘If,’ says Archbishop King, ‘we take these as schemes designed to give us different views of God, and his transactions with men, in order to oblige us to distinct duties which we owe him, and stretch them no farther, they are very reconcileable: and to go about to clash the one against the other, and argue, as many do, that if the one be true the other cannot, is full as absurd as to object against that Article of our Belief that Christ sits on the right hand of God, because Scripture in other places and plain reason assures us, that God hath neither hands nor parts.’ Sermon on Predestination, §. 27.]

Much doubtless of the error which is afloat in the world on these subjects arises from not bearing steadily in mind that all the words and forms of speaking applied to the Deity, being borrowed from other objects, cannot adequately describe his nature and proceedings. They are the best means, indeed the only means we have of expressing our thoughts upon this subject at all, but they ought never to be used without a reverential sense of their imperfection—and the rule of interpreting them always as *relative* to ourselves is an admirable preservative against many mistakes and perplexities, into which men are led by a critical analysis of scriptural terras. It is to teach *us* how to feel and act towards God, not to explain *his* nature that such words are chosen. If he is said to be *angry*—it is that we may feel it our interest to endeavour to please him. If he is described as *unchangeable* - is that we may not indulge the weak imagination of eluding, surprising, or finding him capricious and careless, as *men* often are, forgetful of their purpose, and less peremptory at one time than another. If is said to pity and repent, it is that we may neglect nothing which we should do in a case of distress to make a *man* pity and repent.

The scholastic rule is no bad one for the interpretation of such language, *Affectus in Deo denotant effectum*. When the *effect* is the same which certain passions would naturally lead to in men, we speak of it as proceeding from the same *cause*: but nothing would be more absurd, as well as impious,

than because the name of a certain passion is employed in these cases, to pursue the investigation farther, analysing the elements, the motives, the objects of that passion in men, and drawing inferences from hence concerning the divine nature and dispensations. Is it for us to say, 'that in the purpose of God the operation of many simple elements, co-existent in the same mind, is combined—that there are leadings and leanings in his mind to the point and on the side of mercy—but those leadings and leanings are counteracted and over-ruled— his *whole* mind, his mind *in action*, is against such exercise of mercy?

[*Vaughan's defence of the Calvinistic Clergy, p. 110*]

This language, taken from one of the advocates of Calvinism, places in a strong light the danger of attempting to be wise above what is written—and the boldness with which things that the angels desire to look into, are in this manner treated, as if they were the proper subject of human argumentation, is no slight evidence of the unsoundness of those opinions which it is employed in supporting.

in the same spirit it is said, with the most peremptory confidence, that 'whatever *may be* and *is*, *must be* - that 'to talk of *permission* is to call God imperfect'—that 'what he foresees and knows and has the power to hinder but does not, that he must be said to ordain —that 'either God was counter- acted and overreached, or that he ordained the fall"—that to say he *permitted* the fall is a foolish term—he ordained the fall that he might get himself glory out of it.'

The majority, I am aware, of those who are now called Calvinists condemn this doctrine in the strongest terms, as tending to deny the moral attributes of the Deity, and to make God the author of sin: but the same reason ought surely to be allowed to operate against that construction of divine *counsels* and *decrees*, which not only regards all human actions as necessary, but represents certain individuals only as eternally elected to salvation, and certain others unalterably excluded or passed over. The advocate for the former doctrine is at least consistent when he says 'there is no resting place between Supralapsarianism and Socinianism'—and that in all cases 'such was the *design* of God, for such is the actual *result*.' But if we disallow this inference where it contradicts the revealed attributes of God, although we must be content to leave the mystery unexplained, why may it not with as little scruple be disallowed,

where it militates against express declarations of holy Scripture, and is utterly inconsistent with the plain and unsophisticated notion which all mankind have of the act of *prayer*?

So far indeed is it from being the rule of interpreting Scripture to infer *design* whenever an *event* is related or foretold, that it has even long been recognized as an established principle among biblical critics to *invert* this rule, where the context or the subject matter seemed to require it: that is, to interpret many passages in which a form of speech usually expressive of *design* is employed, as if the purpose merely was to set forth the actual *event*. For example,

'I am not come to send peace on earth, but a sword [Matt. 10:34.]'

Does the Calvinist himself understand these words as equally expressive of our Lord's *design*, with that benevolent declaration,

'The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them [Luke 9:56.]?'

Or again, in those numerous passages which point out the fulfillment of prophecy under the customary form, 'That it *might be* fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,' does he object to the obvious and ordinary interpretation, 'Then *was* fulfilled

[See Matt. 2:23; 13:35. 27:35. John 15:25. 17: 12; 19:24. It is worthy of remark, that the frequent use of shall for will in our Bible translation favours the Calvinistic interpretation of prophecy, and gives the appearance of an authoritative decree to many passages which simply announce what is about to happen. But this use of the word shall is no evidence of the opinions of the Bible translators one way or the other, if it be true, which I have heard asserted by a very competent judge, that the word will is never used in that translation as the sign of the future tense merely, but that when employed it always denotes volition. The extended use of the word will to express simple futurity seems to be one of the changes our language has undergone during the last two centuries.]?'

Innumerable are the difficulties which the language of Scripture presents similar to that which has been just considered, and which often cause uneasiness in the minds of those who still resist the Calvinistic interpretation. But in general, I believe, they will be sufficiently lightened, if not wholly removed, by observing the principle before maintained—

that God is revealed to us not as he is *absolutely* in himself, but *relatively* to ourselves— and that the terms employed are such as clearly to indicate not his nature and essence, but the duties which belong to us arising out of that *relation*. A sentiment, which cannot be conveyed in plainer or better words than in those of Luther; 'To know,' says he, 'anything of God otherwise than as revealed in Scripture—what his nature is, what he does, or what he wills—belongs not to me: my business is to know what are his precepts, his promises, and his threatenings.'

Nor can we adopt a better practical rule to prevent the application of these *relative* terms from being pushed too far, than to check it, the moment we perceive that it begins to trench upon any of the revealed attributes of God—such as his justice, his goodness, his mercy—or to contradict any positive declaration of his will. 'No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' It were well if this rule, which was continually present to Luther's mind, were more observed than it is by Christian divines. We should not then be offended, as we often are, by a boldness of language when speaking of the nature of the Deity, which a prudent naturalist avoids in the investigation even of the meanest of his creatures.

Before we close this part of the enquiry, it may be well briefly to advert to the argument often derived in support of the predestinarian hypothesis, from the fulfilment of *prophecy*.

Here they say we are not left to infer from the nature of God that he *foreknows* what will be done, he actually *foretells* it—and then it must come to pass, or God would be the author of a lie.

Now the first answer to this argument is the same with that already given to the argument drawn from the foreknowledge of God—prophecy being only the *declaration* of that which cannot ever have been unknown to God, whether declared or not. If therefore his *knowledge* is not to be regarded as imposing constraint or necessity on the events themselves, his *declaring* that knowledge makes no conceivable difference. One of the important ends of prophecy is to confirm our faith, and to fill us with an awful sense of the attention with which the Almighty regards human affairs. 'These things have I told you, that when the time cometh, ye may remember that I told you of them.' That the assertions also are free from error,

that the prophecy will not fail of being accomplished, we admit—but the prediction is not the *efficient cause* of its being accomplished, any more than the knowledge is, of which the prophecy is the mere enunciation. The *effects* arise from that free agency of man which is not compelled to act, but which in following the dictates of his own will is, made to further the gracious designs of God for the welfare of his Church. And thus, the conqueror or the tyrant, 'though he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, although it be in his heart to cut off and to destroy nations not a few [*Isa. 10:7*],' yet often becomes the predicted instrument for chastising a sinful people, or for introducing some ulterior plan of restoration and mercy.

It is with this, as with most other speculative disputes, a laxity in the use of language introduces confusion into our thoughts. We have before observed, that *impossible* is often said of things merely because *no doubt* can reasonably be entertained concerning them, although they may lie within the compass of *powers* well known to exist. The same holds good of many other phrases expressive of necessity, by which, if we examine them more closely, we find that nothing like *compulsion* or physical necessity is intended, but merely an intimate connexion and coherence with something else. Thus the dependence of a conclusion on its premises in most languages is denoted by the same terms which express physical necessity: and the close correspondence between a prophecy and its accomplishment (two things which are often widely separated in point of time) is in the same manner frequently forced upon our notice. That the prophecy should be fulfilled is to human apprehension a necessary *consequence* of its being delivered: and the delivery of a prophecy is a conclusive *reason* why we may believe and assert that the thing predicted will come to pass—but that the prophecy is the *cause* of its own fulfilment, or that the delivery of it makes it impossible for the particular agents who fulfil it to do otherwise, are conclusions wholly unwarranted by such a mode of speaking.

How absurd, for instance, would it be to assert that Peter's denial was made inevitable by our Lord's prophecy; when, humanly speaking, instead of contributing towards it, the utterance of the prophecy was the likeliest way to frustrate its own completion. But yet it may be said to follow as a *logical consequence* from the assertion of the foreknowledge

and veracity of God, (taking these terms precisely as they are applied to human nature,) that this prophecy *must* be accomplished. We may be certain that the thing will happen, and then (as was before observed) the *thing* itself is by a metonymy called *certain*—but in reality the thing remains as it was before, no efficient causes being set in action but those which would have acted had no such prophecy been delivered.

[One of the, most remarkable passages in which the language of Scripture expresses this necessity is in St. John's Gospel. 'Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias saith again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.' John 12:39. Upon which Bishop Tomline well observes, 'The things did not happen because they were foretold, but they were for the wisest purposes foretold because it was foreseen that they would happen.'

As a curious proof how offensive to our natural and unbiassed judgment it is to confound the ideas of foreseeing and influencing an event, let me produce the remarks of some of Milton's commentators upon the line Or aught by me immutably foreseen. Par, Lost, 3:121.

Bentley, struck with the manifest incongruity, proposes to read immutably foredoomed. Pearce says of Bentley, 'His objection is right but his emendation is wrong,' and proposes, Or aught by me immutable foreseen. Newton with better judgment retains the original reading, and observes, 'Immutably foreseen seems to mean so foreseen as to be immutable.']

And here in the last place let me observe, that whatever *certainty* we may justly feel that the word of God pronounced by his prophets will be accomplished, whatever terms denoting *necessity* may be employed to link

these things together—and doubtless there is nothing in the constitution of nature more necessary than this connexion—yet God himself has plainly shewn that HE will be tied down by no such verbal restraints in his dealings towards men—that even the formal denunciation of his vengeance shall not shut out all hope of mercy from the guilty in this life, nor forbid the penitent sinner to seek a revocation of his sentence by means of prayer. What could be more peremptory than the condemnation

pronounced against Ahab by the prophet Elijah? Yet upon his sincere repentance and humiliation the terms of the sentence were mitigated by God's express authority, and the cause of that mitigation was declared. So again, after Hezekiah in his sickness had been told *by the word of the Lord* 'to set his house in order, for that he 'should die and not live [2Kings 20:1],' yet was a remission of this sentence granted to his intense supplication flowing from the heart. 'And the Lord said, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tear's: behold, I will heal thee.'

It may be replied, by way of shewing the difficulty of obtaining such a revocation, that even in this case the alteration of the laws of nature is represented as an easier matter—that the shadow of the sun-dial went back, as an evidence that God's word would thus be recalled. It is not however the *easiness* of this proceeding for which I contend, but its *practicability*. There is a faith which can remove mountains: and against that faith it is presumptuous and unwarrantable in man to oppose any obstacle as insuperable, or any *decrees* of God as unalterably binding.

It is impossible indeed for language to be more explicit or more authoritative than the revelation made to the Church on this very point by the prophet Jeremiah.

"Then the *word of the Lord came unto me*, saying, 'O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.'

At what instant I shall *speak* concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation against whom *I have pronounced* turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

And at what instant I shall *speak* concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I *said* I would benefit them?" [Jer. 18:5]

The examples of this procedure on the part of the Almighty as revealed in Scripture are not numerous, but they are decisive of the question. 'Yet forty days,' said the prophet Jonah, 'and Nineveh shall be overthrown.' But the whole city repented— 'And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had *said* that he would do unto them; and he *did* it not.' Surely these things 'happened

unto them for ensamples, and were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come [*1Cor. 10:11*].’ The prophet who was made the herald of this divine decree, and whose words were not verified in the event, yielded to the infirmity of human nature—‘it displeased him exceedingly’ that God spared the city, ‘and he was very angry [*Jon. 4:1*].’ But God instructed him, provoked and mortified as he was, that he *willeth not* the death of a sinner—and that no thoughts or reasonings of ours can prescribe bounds to the divine mercy.

And let those of the Christian Church who, while they support the doctrine of absolute decrees and appeal to the express declarations of Scripture as the grounds of their opinion, fancy that they are jealous for the honour of God, lest his word should seem to be made of none effect—let them look well to their own hearts, that no secret jealousy for their own credit, no pride of intellect, no presumption in the powers of reason, and no obstinacy in adhering to what they have once pronounced to be demonstrable, lurk there, and give a bias to their minds on these questions. Above all, let them remember, that the boundless extent of God’s mercy, and of his love for mankind, has been manifested to human eyes in a spectacle far more instructive and affecting than the worm and the gourd of Jonah—and that for us to grudge the communication of that mercy to any one of his creatures, or to regard it as shackled by any antecedent decrees and declarations, is still more at variance with the proofs he has given, that he *willeth not* that any should perish, and that in every nation he that *feareth* him and *worketh* righteousness, is, through *faith* in the merits of Christ, accepted with him.

NOTES TO DISCOURSE 3.

A GREAT part of the argument of the preceding Discourse is so nearly coincident with that maintained in the valuable Sermon of Archbishop King on Predestination and Foreknowledge [*Preached before the House of Lords in Ireland, A. D. 1709, annexed to his Work on the Origin of Evil.*] that I cannot omit the opportunity thus afforded me of recommending that treatise to all students who have been conscious to themselves of any confusion or perplexity upon these subjects. It has indeed been the practice of the most eminent divines to dissuade us from entering far into such abstruse speculations, induced by a reasonable disgust of the manner in which topics of that sacred nature are too often

handled, and by a disapprobation of many consequences which seemed plausibly enough to be connected with each opinion, when peremptorily maintained. Passages to this effect from the writings of Luther have been already produced. And it appears that our own Reformers, especially Cranmer and Ridley, were of the same opinion.

‘Sudden changes,’ said Ridley, ‘without substantial and necessary cause, and *the heady setting forth of extremities*, I did never love [*Letter to West, in the Martyr's Letters, p. 40.*].’ As to Ridley, it is clearly proved by Dr. Laurence, in his Introduction to the treatises before mentioned, that Bradford could not obtain from him that approval and sanction which he importunately desired, of his own doctrines on Predestination. Bradford’s tract is written in the high and confident strain of the Calvinistic school. A copy of this he had sent to Ridley when in prison at Oxford, soliciting at the same time some public declaration of his opinion upon these points. Ridley answered with mildness and moderation—not declining the task for want of leisure, or want of inclination to employ his mind in labours of this kind, but evidently unwilling to pronounce a peremptory opinion upon matters so mysterious, and so far elevated above the sphere of our conceptions. ‘Sir,’ he says, ‘*in these matters I am so fearful, that I dare not speak farther, yea almost none otherwise, than the text doth (as it were) lead me by the hand.*’ [*Martyr's Letters, p. 65.*]

Now the excellence of Archbishop King’s argument consists in explaining the grounds and reasons of this wise caution.

1. He observes that the nature of God is universally agreed to be incomprehensible by human understanding—that the descriptions we frame to ourselves of God or of the divine attributes are not taken from any direct and immediate perceptions that we have of him or them, but from observations we have made of his works; and from the consideration of those qualities which we conceive would enable us to perform the like. In this way we ascribe *wisdom* and *foresight* to him, because he does what cannot be performed by us without the help of those faculties. That these faculties in him are of a nature different from our own we must be very sensible—but because of the similarity of their effects we give them the same name.

2. After the same manner the language of Scripture ascribes hands, feet,

and eyes, to God; and although in this case it is universally allowed that the terms are metaphorical, yet the principle of the application is the same as in the former case.

3. Passions also are attributed to God, bearing the same name with human passions, not that we believe God to be really subject to mental perturbation, but because the effects upon mankind are similar to those which are produced by such passions in ourselves.

4. The powers and operations of our minds are likewise ascribed to God in the same way of comparison or analogy. Purpose, contrivance, counsel, design, decree, are all attributed to him, because things appear to be done or directed by him, which among men proceed from such causes: but a very slight reflection teaches us, that these terms, which are suitable enough to human proceedings, are all imperfect expressions when applied to God; helping us only to form some notions, but those faint and inadequate, of his divine perfection.

They are not to be understood then in their literal sense as *direct* and *proper* appellations; and we ought never to pursue these comparisons farther than the occasion on which they are used requires; nor draft positive conclusions from such premises as if the terms were in themselves proper and thoroughly understood. In like manner when speaking of our own minds, because we use the words, *weigh*, *penetrate*, *reflect*, which are all expressions borrowed from matter, it would be equally absurd to carry on the comparison into all other particulars of those actions—and to suppose that weighing a thing in our minds must have all the effects, and be accompanied with all the circumstances, that are observable in weighing a body.

The important use made by the author of this doctrine is, 1st, to check presumption and irreverence towards the Almighty when we converse and reason about these matters; and, 2ndly, to reconcile us to those seeming contradictions in Scripture, which have given birth to angry disputes among Christians, but which, if duly interpreted according to this rule, ought no more to surprise us than when we read in one place of God's *repenting*, and in another that he does *not* repent.

It is impossible to peruse this Sermon without being struck with the candour and moderation of the writer. Free from attachment to any system or to any party, truth seems to be his only object: and with the

usual fate of those who write on this principle, he has been made the object of attack by the eager partizans of both sides in the Calvinistic controversy. He has been accused by Arminians as well as Calvinists of denying the *moral attributes* of the Deity— and by some of denying even the *being* of a God.

The author of the latter accusation is Dr. John Edwards, a learned divine of that age, who published an answer to the Archbishop's Sermon, written with all the bitterness and insolence usual in such contentions, but which was in this case entirely unprovoked, as the Sermon is wholly free from those charges against the Calvinistic opinions, which are commonly alledged by the Arminians with so much heat and asperity: and the great object of the writer is, not only to satisfy humble and pious minds, but to restrain the animosities of both parties, and to shew the unreasonableness of their mutual accusations.

This however will not satisfy a professed controversialist, as Edwards was. He endeavours therefore to prove, that because the Archbishop speaks of the intellectual and moral attributes of the Deity as only known to us by analogy and as being named accordingly, he does in effect resolve the whole of religion into *figure*, and denies the *real nature* of these things as much as he denies bodily parts and passions. According to this plan, the Church of England might, he says, as well have described God to be without wisdom, knowledge, goodness, and justice, as without body, parts, and passions—and when we have stripped the notion of God of these attributes, and reduced it to *the general cause of all effects*, we are in fact no better than Atheists.

This objection the Author had himself anticipated, and has provided what to many readers will appear to be a sufficient answer. He observes,

‘The common use of figures is to represent things that are otherwise very well known, in such a manner as may magnify or lessen, heighten or adorn, the ideas we have of them. And the design of putting them in this foreign dress, as we may call it, is to move our passions, and engage our fancies more effectually than the true and naked view of them is apt to do, or perhaps ought. And from hence it too often happens, that these figures are employed to deceive us, and make us think better or worse of things than they really deserve.

But the analogies and similitudes that the holy Scriptures or our own

reason frame of divine things, are of another nature; the use of them is to give us some notion of things whereof we have no direct knowledge, and by that means lead us to perception of the nature, or at least of some of the properties and effects of what our understandings cannot directly reach; and in this case to teach us how we are to behave ourselves towards God, and what we are to do, in order to obtain a more perfect knowledge of his attributes.

And whereas in ordinary figurative representations, the thing expressed by the figure is commonly of much less moment than that to which it is compared; in these analogies the case is otherwise, and the things represented by them have much more reality and perfection in them, than the things by which we represent them. Thus, weighing a thing in our minds is a much more noble and perfect action than examining the gravity of a body by sale and balance, which is the original notion from whence it is borrowed; and reflection, as in our understandings, is much more considerable than the rebounding of one hard body from another, which yet is the literal sense of reflection. And after the same manner, what we call knowledge and foreknowledge in God, have infinitely more reality in them, and are of greater moment than our understanding or prescience, from whence they are transferred to him; and in truth these, as in man, are but faint communications of the divine perfections, which are the true original, and which our powers and faculties more imperfectly imitate, than a picture does a man: and yet if we reason from them by analogy and proportion, they are sufficient to give us such a notion of God's attributes, as will oblige us to fear, love, obey, and adore him.'

But as the objection continues to be urged by many who are not infected with the spirit of controversy, and who seriously think that the honour of God is impaired by this explanation, it may be well to examine the question more in detail. Indeed this examination is the more necessary, because the words *analogy* and *resemblance*, about which the whole question turns, are used loosely and indiscriminately, not only in popular discourse, but by philosophical and scientific writers of modern times; and even by the author himself they are not employed with sufficient precision upon so nice a point.

Analogy does not mean the similarity of two *things*, but the similarity,

or sameness, of two *relations*. There must be more than two *things* to give rise to two *relations*: there must be at least three; and in most cases there are four. Thus A may be *like* B, but there is no *analogy* between A and B: it is an abuse of the word to speak so, and it leads to much confusion of thought. If A has the same relation to B which C has to D, then there is an analogy. If the first relation be well known, it may serve to explain the second, which is less known: and the transfer of name from one of the terms in the relation best known to its corresponding term in the other, causes no confusion, but on the contrary tends to remind us of the similarity that exists in these relations; and so assists the mind instead of misleading it.

In this manner things most *unlike* and discordant in their nature may be strictly *analogous* to one another. Thus a certain *proposition* may be called the *basis* of a system. The proposition is to the system what the basis is to a building. It serves a similar office and purpose: and this last relation being well known is of use to illustrate the other which was less known. E.g. The system *rests* upon it; it is *useless to proceed* with the argument till this is well established: if this were *removed*, the system must fall. The only cautions requisite in the use of this kind of analogy are, FIRST, not to proceed to a comparison of the corresponding terms as they are intrinsically *in themselves* or in their own nature, but merely as they are *relation* to the other terms respectively; and, SECONDLY, not to presume that because the relation is the same or similar in one or two points, therefore it is the same or similar in all.

The FIRST of these errors cannot be committed in the instance before us, because the two things are of such different natures that they have no one point of resemblance. But when the first and the third term are not only corresponding in relation, but chance also to be of a kindred nature, or when, from the circumstance of one being visible and the other invisible, their discrepancies do not strike us, it often happens that a comparison is pursued between the *things themselves*, and this is one cause of the promiscuous use of the terms *similitude* and *analogy*. As for example, when Locke, having once established the comparison, proceeds to talk of Ideas as if they were really images in the mind, or traces in the brain.

It is from observing this tendency in men to regard the metaphorical or analogous name as bringing along with it something of the nature of the

thing it originally signified, that Mr. Stewart is led to make the remark not less original than just, that it is well for the understanding, though it may be a loss to the fancy, when a metaphorical word has lost its pedigree - that is, when it no longer excites the primary idea denoted by it, and is reduced by custom to a plain and direct appellation in its secondary sense. He suggests also with equal ingenuity, in cases where words have not yet been worn down to this use, the expedient of *varying* our metaphor when speaking of the same subject, as a preservative against this dangerous and encroaching error. Of the utility of this practice I have no doubt: and I think it may be regarded as an advantage of the same kind, that the parables of the New Testament are drawn from such a great diversity of objects, as to check the propensity in man, especially in matters of religion, to attach some mystical character to the images so employed, and to look upon them as emblems possessing an intrinsic virtue, or sit least a secret affinity with those spiritual truths, to the illustration of which they are made subservient.

When the points in which this similarity of relation holds are of secondary importance—when instead of being essential and characteristic, they are slight and superficial—the analogy is often called a metaphor, and often a similitude, as being addressed rather to the fancy than to the judgment, and intended rather to adorn and illustrate, than to explain. But it would perhaps be better to avoid the name *similitude* in these cases, and to regard them as being, what they really are, *analogies*, although subsisting in points of inferior moment.

Thus when the swallow is called the herald of summer, or a ship is said to plough the waves, it is easy to resolve the phrase into the form of analogy or proportion: the swallow is to the summer what the herald is to his prince; he announces his approach. So the action of a ship is to the sea, what the action of a plough is to the land. But because in these cases the relation is *fanciful* rather than *real*, that is, it consists not in essential points but in mere circumstances of inferior importance, we leave such things to the province of taste or amusement, and no considerate man ever attempts to reason from them.

‘I am not of the mind of those speculators,’ said Mr. Burke, ‘who seem assured that all states have the same period of infancy, manhood, and decrepitude, that are found in individuals. Parallels of this sort rather

furnish similitudes to illustrate or to adorn, than supply analogies from whence to reason. The objects which are attempted to be forced into an analogy are not found in the same classes of existence. Individuals are physical beings—commonwealths are not physical but moral essences.' [*Letters on a Regicide Peace*, p. 4.]

A remarkable example of this kind is that argument of Toplady against free-will, who, after quoting the text *Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house* [1 Pet. 2: 6.], triumphantly exclaims, 'This is giving free-will a stab under the fifth rib: for can stones hew themselves, and build themselves into a regular house ?'

[*Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 56,]

Even when we attribute to inanimate things the qualities of animals, the same analysis may be adopted as before. Thus the *rage* of the sea denotes a similarity of effect to the effect of rage in animals. This is even more the work of fancy than the example before given: for in reducing it to the form of a proportion, *one term* is wholly supplied by the imagination. We do not really believe there is a principle in the sea producing these effects, answering to rage in animals, but the imagination suggests such a principle, and transfers the name of rage to it.

In those cases where the analogy is traced between things *perfectly heterogeneous* there is little danger of confounding the idea with that of similitude. But when the subjects we are comparing are of a *kindred nature*, so that the things spoken of not only stand in the same relation, but also bear a close resemblance to each other, then it is we are most apt to confound them together, and to substitute resemblance for analogy. Thus because the heart or the tooth of an animal not only serves the same office to the animal that the heart or the tooth of a man does to him, but is also an object very nearly resembling it in structure and outward appearance, we are apt to imagine that the same name is given to it solely on this last account. But if we pursue the enquiry throughout the animal creation, we shall find that the form of the corresponding parts is infinitely varied, although the analogy remains the same; till at length we arrive at such diversities, that it is only persons conversant in comparative anatomy who can readily detect the analogy. And long before the difference has reached this length, in popular discourse the

analogical name is dropped, and the scientific use of it in such cases sounds pedantic to unlearned ears. Thus the beak of a bird answers to the tooth of man, and the shell of a lobster to the bones of other animals. If the use and office remain the same, no diversity of form impairs the analogy: but we ought from such examples to learn even when similitude of form *does* exist, not to regard it as the true ground of the comparison we make, and of our affixing the same name.

Thus too when we speak of *qualities* of things which are not cognizable by our senses except in their effects, we bestow the same name on account of a real or supposed analogy, not on account of any similarity in the qualities themselves, which may or may not exist *according as the things we speak of are more or less of a kindred nature*. Sagacity, courage, fidelity, love, jealousy, revenge, are all predicated of brute animals not less than of man, although they are not things or existences in themselves, but certain attributes or affections in them, exhibiting symptom and producing effects corresponding with the symptoms and effects attendant upon those qualities in ourselves. In these instances, *still more* than in the former, we are prone to confound analogy with resemblance—because as these things have no form or existence of their own—as the whole essence of them consists in their relation to something else—if the *relations* be alike, the *things* are necessarily alike, and we naturally slide into that form of speaking which makes no distinction between analogy and resemblance: but even then we regard the *qualities* as identical, only in proportion as the *nature* of the respective subjects to which they belong may be regarded as the same.

The SECOND error above noticed as carefully to be avoided in the use of analogy is, when we do not indeed treat the corresponding terms as *resembling one another* in their own nature, but when we presume that a similarity of relation subsists in *other points* besides those which are the foundation of the analogy.

When the analogy consists in slight or superficial circumstances, still more when it is fanciful only, no attempt whatever should be made to reason from it; as was exemplified in the passage produced from Burke's writings: but even when the analogy is solid and well-founded we are liable to fall into error, if we suppose it to extend farther than it really does. Errors of this nature are often committed by men of lively fancies,

or of ardent minds, and they are the more seducing because they set out not only with a shew of reason, but with reason and truth actually on their side.

Thus because a just analogy has been discerned between the metropolis of a country, and the heart in the animal body, it has been sometimes contended that its increased size is a disease—that it may impede some its most important functions—or even be the means of its dissolution.

Another frequent example of this *second* error is found in the use of the same titles of office or dignity in different nations or in distant times. Although the relation denoted by them be the same in one or in several important particulars, yet it scarcely ever holds throughout; and the most false notions are in consequence entertained by people of the nature of these corresponding offices in every country but their own. We have known what mischief has been produced by the adoption of the phrase, 'servant of the people,' although it cannot be denied that in some points the duty of the magistrate is the same as the duty of a servant—that his time for instance, his thoughts, his abilities, should be devoted to the benefit of the people—and again, on the other hand, because the duty of a subject towards his sovereign coincides in many respects with the duty of a child towards his parent, some speculative writers have hastily concluded that the institution of monarchy is equally founded in nature, and possesses the same inherent authority with the parental.

But as it is the *first* error out of which the present discussion arises, I will dwell no longer upon this head.

Having thus endeavoured to fix the true notion of *analogy*, let us apply it to the question under consideration.

In the first place, when we speak of the *eye*, the *arm*, the *hand* of God, all are agreed in regarding these as purely analogical expressions—not indicating any resemblance in the things spoken of, but simply denoting that we recognize in God faculties analogous to those signified by these words, but of a nature wholly different.

In the second place, when we ascribe *anger*, *jealousy*, *repentance*, *revenge*, to God, we are never supposed to mean more than that his dealings will be to us such as proceed from these passions in men. It is not even pretended that there are qualities in his nature similar to these

qualities in us, but the analogy is founded only upon the relation of cause and effect. The analogy is not indeed altogether fanciful, as when we speak of the rage of the sea. God is still regarded as an *agent*; but having no word to denote the active cause in him, we borrow the word which belongs to the cause of these effects in men.

Thirdly, when we speak of the *wisdom* and *knowledge* of God, his *justice*, *mercy*, *love*, *long-suffering*, the process is precisely similar to that before described. There are effects continually coming under our notice which indicate these qualities in men, and from a view of *effects* similar to these in the system of the universe we suppose corresponding *qualities* in the Author of that system, and accordingly bestow upon them the same name.

In the *first* and *second* of these cases, hardly any difference of opinion exists among Christians. We discover indeed the natural propensity of mankind towards the confusion above mentioned, in the instance of the *Anthropo-morphites*, and in those fictitious deities of the heathen world to whom all the infirmities of human nature belonged. It is however only in the *last* of the three cases, that any serious controversy now arises—and because the qualities here spoken of are such as we esteem and admire among men, it has been thought not only allowable to indulge the notion of their being really *like* to the corresponding qualities in God, but to deny this resemblance has been called impious and atheistical.

The charge has been alledged too against writers who, like Archbishop King, assert in the strongest terms their belief in the superior excellence of the divine nature, and who call any qualities that are estimable and praiseworthy in man, dim shadows and faint communications of those attributes which exist in God in complete and adorable perfection.

But if we examine the question attentively, it will perhaps be found that the objection arises not so much from a jealousy for the honour of God, to which it pretends, as from a jealousy for the honour of man. It has been before observed, that analogy may be perfect where there is no resemblance, that is, where the corresponding terms are wholly heterogeneous—and that resemblance takes place in proportion as the objects denoted by those terms are of a kindred nature. Because therefore the nature of man partakes both of matter, and of passions, we instantly discard all such ideas when speaking of God, and look upon the words

expressive of *them* as simply analogous. What ground have we then for pursuing a different course with the words expressive of *intellectual* and *moral* attributes, except that we conceive a similarity in the *nature* of man and of God in these respects, and are unwilling to relinquish so exalted a pretension? But whatever ground there may be for this notion in the Scriptural phrase *image of God*, there is surely more than enough both in reason and in Scripture to repress the rash supposition, that we are justified in reasoning upon his nature, as we would upon our own: that is, in drawing inferences from those attributes in him which we call wisdom, justice, mercy, with the same confidence that we do from those qualities in ourselves, as if the words were expressive of the *same determinate notion* which we annex to them when speaking of ourselves. Even in our own nature we have very imperfect ideas of these qualities. They appear often to interfere with one another, and opinions differ as to the occasions in which each ought to prevail. Nothing indeed is more common in criticism than the remark, that if one virtuous quality be much heightened, it must be at the expense of another; and that a perfect mixture not only never existed, but that it cannot even be described or represented. But of this we are sure, that whatever is really valuable or excellent in ourselves, exists in an infinite degree of excellence in God; and it is only in so far as - we have any thing good in us, that we venture to transfer and appropriate to his nature the language proper to our own.

That, such is the cause of the jealousy expressed by many on this subject, is rendered more probable by observing what takes place in the comparison of ourselves with, the lower animals. We make no scruple to call their parts and passions by the same names with our own—but an unwillingness is often observable among men to bestow upon any of their qualities the titles *intellectual and moral*, or to speak of their reason, knowledge, fidelity, gratitude, and the like (although the analogy is often as close as these, instances as in the other, and men are continually driven in spite of their prejudices to speak in this manner) because it would look like admitting them to a participation of the same *nature* with ourselves, if these words were understood when applied to them in any other than a figurative sense.

Now if we were to practise a degree of humility in looking above us, answering to that jealous pride we feel in regard to things below us, we ought to guard the expressions which are applied in common both to the

divine and the human nature with still greater care— and never push the application of them farther than the *relation* which they are intended to signify clearly warrants; because it is undeniable, at least in the case of *intellectual* attributes, that the nature of many a living creature approaches nearer to ours, than ours does to that of the eternal and invisible God.

The names indeed of all particular virtues *essentially* denote relation, such as justice, kindness, generosity, prudence, and cannot with any degree of propriety be predicated *literally* of a being who does not literally bear the same relation to us, which we bear to one another. They are understood to denote only that we are to expect from God that treatment which we should experience from a just, kind, generous and prudent person—and that too in a degree much more eminent and perfect, than ever can be experienced from men. And further, when he is represented as our King, our Master, our Father, the meaning is, that all that is right and estimable in those relations *will* on his part certainly be done by him, and *ought* on our part to be done and felt by us. Does such a representation lie open to the charge of denying any thing that is suitable to the divine nature? or can it tend in the slightest degree to suppress the feelings of piety, gratitude, and affection in his creatures?

In fact, the outcry raised against this mode of explanation does not appear to arise from any fear lest our sense of the *moral* attributes should be impaired, but because it is employed to solve the difficulty which is raised about the *fore-knowledge* of God being consistent with the *free-will* and the *probation* of his creatures, and thus to overthrow the favourite position of Calvinism. It is to this purpose alone that Archbishop King applies it—and to oppose this purpose it is that Edwards raises the clamour about the moral attributes, as if *their* nature also must be held to be different in kind from human virtues, if the *knowledge* of God be admitted to be different in kind from ours.

Yet if the *nature* of God be essentially different from that of man, does it not seem reasonable and consistent to suppose that what we call *knowledge* in God must in many respects be different also? For an answer to this question I may refer to one of the most peremptory assertors of the doctrine of absolute Predestination, that has ever appeared in this or in any former age.

'Properly speaking,' says Toplady, 'it cannot be affirmed of God that he either did know, or that he will know; but simply, that he knows. For *in Deum non cadunt prius et posterius*: there is no past, nor future to him. All is present, and unsuccessive.

The distribution of things into those that have been, those that are, and those that shall be, is indeed suited to the flux condition, and to the limited faculties of beings like ourselves, whose estimates of duration are taken from the periodical journeys of an opaque grain round a lucid speck termed the Sun; but can have no place in him, of whom it is declared, that a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. And even this declaration, magnificent as it is, falls infinitely short of the mark. When therefore I speak of *fore-knowledge* as an attribute essential to Deity, I speak, as St. Paul says, after the manner of men. The simple term *knowledge* would be more intrinsically proper; but then it would not so readily aid the conceptions of ordinary persons. Though, for my own part, I would always rather call the divine knowledge *omniscience*, than give it any other name.' [*Christian and Philosophy: Necessity Asserted*, c. v.]

That a writer who thus clearly admits the nature of God, in a point so essential, to be widely different from that of man, should yet think himself entitled to reason upon that nature, and draw inferences from his *knowledge*, his *will*, his *happiness*, with the same boldness and confidence that he does when applying these terms to a creature, is to me unaccountable. But so it is. This very writer proceeds in the same treatise to declare, that 'the Deity must have within himself a constant and irremediable source of standing uneasiness, if anything can happen in contrariety to his will—that this frustration must be a calamity on God himself, and inflict essential and never-ending pain, on the divine mind.'

Precisely in this spirit of disputations boldness was the question asked, 'Why doth he yet punish ? for who hath resisted his will?' A question which St. Paul puts down with the dignified and just reproof, 'Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?'

From vainly supposing that when we have affixed a *name* we have acquired a notion as determinate to our understanding, as the form or the sound of the letters is to our senses, men are betrayed into this rash and

dogmatical mode of reasoning. The danger of indulging it is much greater than those who introduced it at first suspected. Edwards, who argues against Archbishop King's explanation with so much apparent zeal for religion, talks of 'that clear and distinct method of reasoning introduced by the new philosophy;' by which he probably means the Cartesian; for although Locke teaches the same doctrine of determinate ideas, whose agreement or disagreement we perceive, and without which, according to him, there is no knowledge, (a gratuitous assumption which leads to a world of errors,) yet as Edwards was one of Locke's earliest antagonists, it is not likely that he would seriously dignify his system with such a title.

Of the evil of applying this method of argumentation to matters of religion, his own tract furnishes a sufficient example. 'Do we not, he says, from the *justice* of God conclude that he will deal with every man according to his merit? Do we not from the same attribute conclude the *necessity* of an incarnate God suffering for the sins of the world? Do we not conclude from his *goodness* his design to save mankind?'

If this be the use we are to make of our *determinate ideas* of God's attributes, we shall be no great sufferers by the loss he so loudly deprecates. For these very things are what may be reckoned among the bad consequences of that new philosophy. And when this author asks, 'How can men know they shall be rewarded or punished in a future state but from the consideration of God's justice?' I answer confidently, we know it from the Scriptures, and we could know it in no other way.

Another exception sometimes urged against this analogical interpretation is, that it nullifies those exhortations of Scripture, by which we are bid to *imitate* our Father which is in heaven— to be holy as he is holy—merciful as he is merciful—perfect as he is perfect. But the notions we have of this holiness, mercy, and perfection in God, are derived from what passes in our own minds; and the meaning of these exhortations is, not to be satisfied with our own limited attainments—not to relax our endeavours—or to value ourselves upon our own merit. Conscious as we must be how imperfect our nature is, we are thus taught never to suppose that we have reached, or that we can reach the bounds of our duty. The same conscience which tells us what is right or wrong, tells us also that we are far short of real excellence. And by fixing that heavenly pattern before our eyes we are daily made sensible how vile and worthless even

our best deeds are, in comparison of that Being whose will we seek to execute, and who has in condescension to our capacities applied to his own transcendent nature the imperfect language we apply to ours. This he has done, not for the purpose of enabling us to speculate and argue and philosophize upon that nature, but to regulate and direct our own minds, to control what is evil in us, and to cultivate what is good.

But it has been already said, that the alarm raised respecting the *moral* attributes is a point incidental to the main question. It is to the *fore-knowledge* of God, and to his *decrees*, that King's reasoning is directed, with a view to silence that dogmatical theology which imposes upon Christians the duty of receiving these words in their literal sense, and of deducing consequences from them precisely as we do when they are used among men. If we interpret these on the same principle as we interpret a hundred other Scripture phrases, the mystery indeed remains unexplained, but the difficulty and the perplexity is removed from men's minds—and what is not the least advantage gained, much unprofitable wrangling that is destructive to all true religion ceases at once. Let us keep to Scripture: and Scripture so understood will never lead us beyond our depth. It is only by going out of Scripture, by building theories of our own upon subjects of which we must have an imperfect knowledge, that such apparent contradictions are produced. If we set up these notions of our own as the standard of faith, and require a peremptory assent to all the inferences which appear to flow from them, we quit the true, the revealed God, and betake ourselves to the idols of our own brain. To Archbishop King we owe that analysis of the error which not only satisfies the understanding that it is an error, but enables us to point out to others where it lies. But in Luther, in Cranmer, in Ridley, in all the great restorers of religious truth in our own country we recognize the same sentiment, that to attempt to know God otherwise than as revealed in Scripture, is a vain, a fruitless, a dangerous undertaking. The words of that blessed martyr [*Ridley. See Martyr's Letters, p. 65.*]

before quoted, cannot be too firmly engraven in the bosom of every Christian.

In these matters I am so fearful, that I dare not speak farther, yea almost none otherwise, than the text doth, as it were, lead me by the hand.

P. 89. *Not in their power to avoid]*

In the furtherance of God's providential dispensations it must often happen that individuals are selected as special instruments— their desires and passions being made subservient *to* some beneficial end. In the language of Scripture they are said to be *appointed, ordained, raised up*, for these very purposes: which expressions have been caught at as proofs that *all* men are but tools for effecting God's designs: but if we believe that the Almighty interposes in the government of this world, directing some events more especially than others, it is but applying this ordinary solution of *natural* phenomena, to the *moral* conduct of men, and we reconcile such peculiar cases with the general belief of man's free choice and consequent responsibility. Indeed the powerful effect of such examples as that of St. Paul's conversion would be lost upon men's minds, if they were not regarded as instances of God's more especial interposition in human affairs. To infer from hence that *all* the actions of men are equally influenced and guided by him, is to weaken the impression made by these very cases. And to conclude from such passages of Scripture, that the *eternal condition* of each individual must also be predetermined and appointed, is still more illogical and inconsistent.

Upon this subject, see some excellent remarks in Sumner's Apostolical Preaching, [*Chap. 2*] a work which has thrown much new light upon all the points connected with the question of Predestination.

P. 100. *The plain and unsophisticated notion which all mankind have of the act of prayer]*

'Can prayer offered under such a conviction,' Mr. Sumner asks, 'be winged with those feelings which the apostles recommend and inspire? Every prayer of a believer in decrees, if it is not a mere expression of thankfulness, must be either an hypocritical form, as it is with those Mahometans who are practical Predestinarians, or it must be a virtual contradiction of his own belief: and, in truth, it is only because that contradiction is deeply implanted in the principles of our rational nature, that the belief itself is not more extensively mischievous".' [*Apostolical Preaching. p. 59.*]

DISCOURSE 4:

LUKE 13:23, 24.

THEN SAID ONE UNTO HIM, LORD, ARE THERE FEW THAT BE
SAVED? AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, STRIVE TO ENTER IN AT
THE STRAIT GATE: FOR MANY, I SAY UNTO YOU, WILL SEEK TO
ENTER IN, AND SHALL NOT BE ABLE.

THIS memorable passage opens a wide field for reflection and enquiry. The question proposed to our Lord is one which might naturally arise in a simple and pious mind, upon the disclosure of a new scheme of redemption. It has in fact formed the subject of more discussion and controversy than any which have distracted the Christian Church, especially during its latter ages; and it is still regarded by many zealous disciples of Christ, as a proper theme for frequent meditation, as calculated to quicken their obedience and to confirm their faith.

And yet one of the first remarks which the reading of the passage naturally suggests is, the little encouragement our Saviour gives to the curiosity which provoked the question. He does not absolutely blame the person who asked it, and altogether refuse an answer; but his answer is such as tends strongly to repress this kind of speculation, and to divert the thoughts of him who is inclined to indulge it into a more profitable channel. Upon other occasions the same caution with respect to a disclosure of future events is observable. Thus, in that remarkable manifestation of himself by the sea of Galilee, after he had risen from the dead, when Peter asked concerning his fellow disciple, 'Lord, and what shall this man do?' our Lord's reply gives an immediate check to the vain enquiry, by recalling his thoughts from such idle wanderings to his own more immediate concern—'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee; follow thou me.' And still more impressively, the last words which he uttered upon earth before his ascension carry with them precisely the same reproof and the same exhortation, namely, to be mindful of their own duty, and to leave the rest to God.

'They asked him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power—but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye

shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.'

In strict harmony with this general tenor of his discourses, I would interpret the passage before us. [*Acts 1:6-8*] 'Trouble not yourself about these matters which it is neither your business nor your interest to know. Enough employment you will have in working out your own salvation. Exert your best endeavours in the pursuit of that object, for it is no light or easy matter. It will give you ample scope for the exercise of all your faculties and all your time. The difficulties are greater than you seem to be aware of—and the mode of pursuing it is very generally mistaken among men.'

Under this view of the text then, it will follow next in order to enquire what are the difficulties which beset the Christian's way, and, according to our Saviour's expressive image, render the gate so narrow through which he must pass, if he pass at all, to eternal life—what are the false means and mistaken hopes which carry so many onward in the road to destruction.

To speak of the temptations which vice throws in our way, the profligate indulgence of depraved appetite, the lust of gain, the thirst of revenge, and other wicked passions, seems quite irrelevant to the present enquiry. Most true it is that the covetous man, the false swearer, the blasphemer, the slanderer, the drunkard, the adulterer, the murderer, and the robber will not inherit the kingdom of God. But who is there that ever expected to enter it by these means? Ask the thousands of those careless livers who swarm in the world whether they ever built their hopes of salvation upon such a basis—they will instantly reject the idea as absurd and impossible. These then cannot be the description of persons whom our Lord meant when he said, that many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. There must be something more than this intended—some error more seducing and much more widely spread among men to account for the awful warning, that multitudes will be disappointed of admission to the kingdom of heaven, because they have sought to enter in by the wrong way.

Putting aside then those who continue in sin, without repentance and without fear, and almost without any sense whatever of religion, as a class that never can be included under our Lord's description, putting aside

also those melancholy fanatics who profess to build on faith in Christ, but who dishonour his name by openly discarding all moral obligation, as a class far too small to answer this description, (for the Antinomian heresy is surely not only the worst but the rarest sort of Christian corruption,) let us enquire candidly and calmly in what that difficulty consists which renders the way of life so narrow, and the numbers who find it comparatively so small.

Is it that the road of virtue, as some moralists have taught us, is steep and rugged and thorny? yet wise men, by the help of their natural reason have discovered that it is difficult and uninviting only in the outset, and that with a little resolution and perseverance it soon becomes the pleasantest and the easiest course. They have demonstrated beautifully, and to my judgment truly and satisfactorily demonstrated, that the surest way to happiness is to practise the best principles, and to cultivate the best affections of our nature—and with an eloquence that truth only can inspire they have set forth the loveliness and the never-failing delights of virtue.

Nay, to this praise of the best heathen philosophers I would add a censure of many pious and well meaning Christian moralists, who have unwisely, and I believe falsely, described the life of a Christian as one of certain misery and severe trial—who have taught him to expect persecution and hatred from all around him—that man will be his enemy—that he is more likely to suffer by doing right than by doing wrong—a doctrine which not only contradicts the best theory that can be formed of divine Providence in the constitution of things, but is at variance also with the express language of Scripture. ‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth [**Matt. 5:5.]**’ ‘Godliness,’ St. Paul observes, ‘hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come [**1 Tim. 4:8.]**’ Which sentiment is inculcated by St. Peter with a kind of appeal to our experience in confirmation of its truth, ‘Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good [**1 Pet. 3:13.]**?’

But supposing this error to be banished from the mind, another mistaken way by which men in all ages, and not in the least degree those of the Christian Church, have thought to obtain the kingdom of heaven, has been the scrupulous observance of religious acts and ceremonies of the most irksome kind—abstinence even from innocent and lawful pleasures—devout abstraction from the world—the rigours of fasting, and

other bodily mortifications and austerities. But that these are not the obstructions which narrow the passage to eternal life, is evident from the whole tenor of the New Testament. They are not the duties which our Lord or his apostles inculcate, when they come to speak more particularly of the qualifications necessary to become his disciples. If the general duty be occasionally enjoined of keeping the body and its appetites in subjection, yet we nowhere find those severe and painful privations recommended, which devotees have been fond of imposing upon themselves, and which in the eyes of the world have too often passed for proofs of a pious and holy frame of mind.

Nay, as the clearest evidence on this point we may refer to the practices which prevail at this day among the false religions of the East—practices which far exceed in bodily pain and self-denial all that has been reported of the most ascetic devotees in the Christian Church. If this be the strait gate which leadeth unto life, the religion of Christ falls short of those degrading superstitions in preparing us for it: nor have the most renowned saints of the Popish calendar yet arrived at that abstraction from all sensible objects, that mortification of appetite, and that continual endurance of torture for the sake of heaven, which are of frequent occurrence among the religious sects of India.

It is not then by the opposition the world offers to an innocent and holy life, it is not by the severe self-denial and oppressive services which the Gospel exacts from us, that the path of life is rendered so narrow, and that man is so reluctant to enter upon it. It is not, I say, so much in the difficulties which lie around him, as in those which spring up within him. It is the pride of his heart which presents the chief obstacle. He cannot bear to be told that his nature is a corrupt, a fallen, a sinful nature: that the carnal or in other words the natural mind is at enmity with God : that if he seeks to be reconciled with God, he must seek it alone through the merits of a Redeemer. To him, not to his own doings, however diligently he may labour in the regulation of his own mind, or in the service of his fellow- creatures, to his Saviour he must refer the whole merit and the whole efficacy of his salvation. That Saviour hath said, ‘that he ‘came to seek and save them that were lost.’ And every man who would be his disciple, let him be the wisest and the most virtuous of men, must believe that he himself was one of those lost creatures whom Christ came to save. He must not only acknowledge with his lips, but in his heart he must feel,

that in the sight of God his best deeds are nothing worth—that however they may tend, as they certainly will tend, to make him happier upon earth, they have no power whatever to raise him to heaven.

Nay more than this, if he trust to himself, if he indulge himself in setting a value before God upon anything that he does, these very deeds will be the instrumental cause of his ruin: they will lead him *from* that gate through which alone he can enter, and will carry him farther and farther in a wrong direction. His good works will never bring him to Christ, but if he lay hold on Christ in sincerity of faith, He will easily and quickly bring him to good works. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is emphatically called the door of the kingdom of heaven. No man cometh to the Father but by him. If then there be in any man's breast a secret longing after self-righteousness—if there be a disposition, however faint, to justify himself by his own performance—any lurking conceit that he, being so much better than others, stands less in need of that atoning merit than the worst of his fellow-creatures, let not such an one think that he will receive anything from the Lord. He may perhaps upon examination find that he has exercised himself in doing what he thinks his duty—that he has abstained from excess—that he has dealt justly, and worked diligently for the good of mankind—that he has even practised many of those virtues which are most truly Christian—that he has been kind, patient, humble, charitable, meek, forgiving—yet if his heart be a stranger to God, giving its affections not to things above but to things on the earth, if he suffer it to plead any one of these services as entitled to reward from God, or as fit even to bear his inspection, he is still in his sins—he will be left to wander on according to his own wayward fancies, and will never find the gate of salvation.

Such was of old the pharisaical pride which provoked the severe rebuke of our Saviour; 'Verily I say unto you, Even the publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you [*Matt. 21:31*].' The case of gross sinners is less desperate than yours. It is possible *they* may be brought to a sense of their wretchedness, and may throw themselves upon the only refuge that is open to them—but you who not only neglect this help, but who willfully betake yourselves to another, are altogether without hope. Ye shall die in your sins. Be your deeds what they may in the sight of men—be they just, upright, benevolent, liberal, humane, while they spring from a corrupt and unregenerate source they cannot

please God. For without faith it is impossible to please him— and without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

If now we reflect on the prevalence of this proud spirit among men, on their proneness to value themselves upon their own worth, on the unwelcome and humiliating confession required by the Gospel from the best and wisest of mankind as well as from the wickedest and the most ignorant, we shall not wonder at the strong comparison by which our Lord illustrates the straitness of that road through which we must pass to salvation. For not only our sinful appetites, but what is much harder, every 'high thought and vain imagination that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' [*2 Cor. 10:5.*]

Neither have we yet described the full extent of that humility to which the heart of man must bow before he can be a disciple of Christ. And the part which remains to be told will perhaps to many minds appear much harder than what has been already stated.

For in thus turning from the lying vanities of self-righteousness to the true and living God, he must not flatter himself that the change is his own work. He must not take credit to himself for the victory, but must give God the praise for having called him out of darkness into his marvellous light. No man cometh to me,' said our Lord, except my Father draw him.' To God then be our thanks and praise rendered, as the giver not only of our natural but of our spiritual life. He is, as our Church often confesses, the Author of all godliness. 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth [*Jam. 1:18*]' It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' [*Phil. 2:13*]. His grace brought us to the knowledge of the truth, and unless we resist or neglect his gracious influence, in spite of all the powers of darkness his grace will preserve us in it.

Here then we may seem to have arrived at a point where the difficulties of the Christian pilgrimage are to end. And here, if we accept the Calvinistic doctrine of indefectible grace and final perseverance, they *do* end. But how contrary is this not only to the natural light of reason which God has implanted in us, but to the whole tenor and complexion of the Christian doctrines as revealed by our Lord and as inculcated by the apostles? 'Watch, for ye know not at what hour the Lord cometh. Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning—and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: and if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. [*Luke 12:35, &c*].'

Is this the language applicable to those who when they have once been admitted into the service of their Lord can never afterwards be rejected from it? Nay, does not our blessed Lord himself in his character of Son of Man, express all that feeling of uncertainty about the faith of his followers, which is so natural to the human heart, and so descriptive of the contingency of what is to come? 'Simon, Simon, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.'

Or again, if we pursue the whole train of St. Paul's reasoning, or of, any one of the apostles, shall we not find the same anxiety for the future, both in the case of themselves individually, and of those whom they address, which indicates the still undetermined nature of their spiritual condition? 'Be not high-minded, but fear.' 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall [*1Cor. 10:12.*].' 'If he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' [Heb. 10] If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. [*Rom. 8:11*] 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest

that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' [1Cor. 9:27]

It is in this point of view that the Calvinistic doctrine appears to be most dangerous, and most at variance with the example of apostolical teaching. They continually represent election in Christ as a reason why the true Christian is zealous of good works. Undoubtedly it is a reason, and a powerful one—but the apostles take pains to represent it as a reason not why he *is* so, but why he *ought to be* [See Sumner's *Apostolical Preaching*, p. 72.]. 'Put on therefore,' says St. Paul to the Colossians, 'put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering [Col. 3:12].'

And to the Corinthians, as an earnest exhortation to moral purity, is the same argument proposed. 'What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, *therefore* glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's [1Cor. 5:19].'

And so with regard not only to moral duties, but to their continuance in the faith, St. Paul never ceases to speak of their election, not as having finally settled their doom, but as an urgent motive for continuing steadfast in the faith.

To the Hebrews he says, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, (for he is faithful that hath promised,) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works [Heb. 10:24].'

To the Corinthians, after the most exulting anticipations of future glory, he adds,

'*Therefore*, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord [1 Cor. 15:58].'

And to the Thessalonians, after telling them that God had from the beginning chosen them to salvation; he subjoins the earnest admonition, 'Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.' [2 Thess. 2:15]

It must then be the constant care and endeavour of the disciple of Christ, *after* he is brought into the way of salvation, to keep himself

steadfast in that way. The corrupt nature of Adam still remains even in the regenerate, and as long as they dwell in this fleshly tabernacle will ever be at war with the spirit. He must strive then not only to grow in grace, but he must examine himself seriously and often whether he be in the faith. However warm, and zealous, and spiritual he may fancy himself or even feel himself to be, yet let him always bear in mind the caution, that every spirit is not of God. There is a spirit of fanaticism and delusion which in its beginnings it is often difficult to distinguish from sober and true piety. Against this delusion he must ever be on his guard; and, as one of the best criterions for ascertaining the point, let him narrowly sift his thoughts as well as severely scrutinize his actions. For if there be any thing in them contrary to Christian humility, or charity, or sobriety, this he may be sure is not from God, neither is it approved of God. To despise or to neglect ordinances, to be morose or unsocial or austere, to be capricious or irregular in religious exercises, to think lightly of the decencies or minor duties of life, are fruits not of the spirit but of the flesh. And if any disposition towards these errors be discoverable, he should regard it as an evidence and a warning that he is in danger of departing from the right way.

Above all, if he indulge a secret pleasure in the comparison of his own case with that of others, an error into which our Calvinistic brethren are most apt to fall, let him instantly check the uncharitable and unchristian thought, and remember that in the portrait of *false* religion which our Saviour described under the character of the self-righteous Pharisee, this very satisfaction forms the leading feature, 'God, I thank thee that 'I am not as other men are.'

If however under this severe and constant discipline he feels that inward joy which a belief of being in communion with Christ diffuses over the mind—if moreover this belief be verified by a consciousness of love towards mankind, and a manifest improvement in virtuous and godly living—he need not fear to encourage within him so just a consolation: and he must learn to despise the calumny or the ridicule of the world if ever it should be cast upon him for this persuasion. But is it possible that any sincere believer should so far belie his profession, as to scoff at this notion of conscious fellowship with the Holy Spirit? When the voice of our Church expressly proclaims, 'that the godly consideration of

Predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things,' can any man who has declared his assent to that Article venture to make the very object it describes a theme of scorn and derision?

Even if there be no attack made upon an *individual*, if it be the *class* only of persons so described upon whom he chooses to discharge his wanton satire, the mischief which his idle words may do, thus cast abroad like stones at random, will assuredly rise up in judgment against him at the last day. But if by contempt and scoffing he seek to injure the credit or to wound the feelings of a brother, and thus lay a stumbling-block in the way of him for whom Christ died, let the awful words of Christ himself sink deep into his heart, and strike dumb his folly, 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea [*Matt. 18:6*].'

It is possible indeed these appellations which provoke the scorn of the world may be assumed as badges of a sect or party and if so, they are justly deserving of severe rebuke and blame. It is possible the individual against whom the ridicule is aimed may be a hypocrite, or he may be an enthusiast—let God be his judge: to his own Master let him stand or fall. But whatever the case may be, he cannot be a greater hypocrite than that man who professes to believe all that our Church believes, and yet vilifies and derides one of her most solemn and explicit declarations.

Having thus endeavoured to shew that the doctrines of our Church, if honestly and fully taught, do conduct men through that narrow way which leadeth unto life, without calling in the aid of those speculative opinions which Calvin and his followers mix up with them, the question might here be left as requiring no farther discussion. Yet I cannot dismiss it finally, without bespeaking your attention a few moments longer, while I point out the connection between this and the former discourses upon the same subject, and briefly lay before you the plan and purpose of the whole argument.

Dissatisfied as I have often been with the attempts made to refute the Calvinistic opinions—attempts which seemed to me often to retain as

much error on their own side as they exposed on the opposite, and to deprive Christianity of much of that spiritual and vital force, which is its main characteristic and essential property, I thought it would be a plainer and safer way to demonstrate the identity of these opinions with that philosophical creed denominated Necessity or Fatalism—to exhibit this creed in its exact form and dimensions—and to refute it by that process of reasoning, which is called *reductio ad absurdum*, namely, by shewing how it contradicts the first principles of man, as a being furnished with active powers and with a sense of right and wrong. Whatever grounds there may be in nature for this philosophical creed, and whatever difficulty there may be in refuting it by direct argument, the same grounds and the same difficulty (precisely the same and no other) will be found to lie in Scripture, and are produced in behalf of Calvinism. The analogy between natural and revealed religion is in this case, as in most others, strict and conclusive—so that according to the admirable argument of Bishop Butler, from being difficulties and objections they become proofs in support of Revelation.

When for instance the Calvinist urges upon us, (who admit that God has from all eternity by his secret will unknown to us predestinated, through Christ, a portion of mankind to eternal life,) when, I say, he urges upon us that God must know each individual of this portion who will be saved, and therefore that the number is long ago fixed and determined, he does in fact say nothing more than the Fatalist who contends, that because God foreknows everything which comes to pass in the world, therefore everything which comes to pass is settled long beforehand—is absolutely fixed and unalterable.

Instead of being disturbed therefore and dismayed by those passages of Scripture which the Calvinist alledges respecting the eternal counsels and the foreknowledge of God, we ought to wonder if they were not there. We should then miss one of those fundamental truths which our natural reason has taught us, and which we might confidently expect would be recognized and confirmed by Revelation. Upon these very passages which are produced to startle and confound us we build our faith. We attempt not to explain away their meaning or to deny their truth. On the contrary, we welcome them as truths which, however inexplicable in their combination, yet separately taken coincide with the clearest deductions of our natural reason. For unless we bold that human liberty is inconsistent

with Providence, or the contingency of events with God's foreknowledge, we can never allow that these passages of Scripture interfere with the doctrine, that man is free to choose and free to act—and that upon himself, upon the use he makes of this high privilege, will in a great measure depend his eternal condition.

Let us not fear then to withdraw this Stoical covering, this garb of human metaphysics, with which Austin first and Calvin afterwards overlaid the divine truths of Revelation. Let us separate this dross of earthly disputation, and restore the pure substance of the Gospel to its pristine lustre and to its native simplicity.

But while we thus throw off the foreign ingredient, let us beware also that no part of the truth itself be suffered to escape at the same time. Let us retain both the purity and the power of faith—laying none other foundation of our hopes of eternal life than that which is laid, the humiliating doctrine of man's natural corruption, and the animating doctrine of his spiritual restoration through a crucified Redeemer.

To you, more especially, who are hereafter to be sent out by the Lord of the harvest as labourers into his harvest, who in humble imitation of your heavenly Master will undertake the gracious errand “to seek and to save that which is lost,” to you does it more especially belong to cast away these fetters of human invention, and to set free your limbs for that glorious work. Go not forth to fight the Lord's battles encumbered with this unmanageable, this needless weapon. It is no sword of ethereal temper: it comes not from God's armoury: but set forward in full assurance of faith, arrayed in that panoply divine which the Scripture supplies abundantly, and which alone is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Take then your example of instruction, not from the jejune tenets of philosophy, but from the bright and living pattern exhibited in the great apostle of the Gentiles. Address yourselves to men's hopes and to their fears—to their sense of duty, and to their moral affections—to their consciousness of what they ought to do and what they can do. Bid them strive with all their might for the mastery. Teach them how much depends upon their own efforts; and their own vigilance; and that those efforts and that vigilance are now doubly called for, lest this mighty deliverance should have been wrought for them in vain.

But above all teach them, as you value your own immortal souls, and as you desire to save theirs, teach them to seek to enter in by the good and the right way—and what must never be forgotten, the ONLY way. Speak not peace when there is no peace. Prophecy not smooth things. Presume not, through any fond notion of benevolence, or any false notion of liberality, much less for the sake of worldly applause or favour, presume not to *widen* that gate which your Lord himself has pronounced to be strait and narrow. For narrow as it is, be assured it is spacious enough for the passage of all those whom you will ever persuade to bend their steps towards it. And should any weak or presumptuous disciple propose to you the question, 'Are there few that be saved?' your answer is ready. It is furnished by our Lord himself, and it ought for ever to silence such vain enquiries.

The number of those that shall be saved may indeed be comparatively few—but we know assuredly, that it was a countless multitude for whom Christ died. We know that the Church in the day of the Lord will consist of a gathering from all nations and from all times. We know that the faithful seed of Abraham shall then be, according to God's eternal promise, as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. It may be your glorious destiny, it ought to be your sanguine hope, (a hope in which the consistent Calvinist can never partake,) that you may *increase* that number— that you may provide guests for that heavenly feast, who would never have heard of it but for your preaching—never have sought after it, but for your persuasion—never have found their way to it, but for your guidance. Happy indeed shall he be who turns one sinner to righteousness—who adds one sheep to the fold into which his Lord's flock will then be gathered: and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, from his hands will he doubtless receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

To Him, the great God and our only Saviour, be glory and honour and thanksgiving and praise in all churches of the saints throughout all ages. Amen.

NOTES.

P. 169. With which Austin first and Calvin afterwards overlaid the divine truths of Revelation.]

Bishop Tomline's learned investigation seems to be decisive of this

point. As preparatory however to that treatise, and as equally conducive to the same conclusion, I would recommend the very ingenious and original argument of Mr. Sumner in the work often before mentioned, especially in the chapter on Election. I allude particularly to the *two criteria* by which he says the truth of that interpretation may be tried, which refers St. Paul's expressions on the subject of Election, not to personal election, but to the election of the Gentiles. *First*, if it was really this election which the Apostle had in view, we may expect to find it most strongly urged and most clearly stated to those churches where the Jewish converts were the most numerous, and the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish nation most familiarly known. That such is the fact he proves by a particular examination of all the Epistles. In the churches of Asia and at Rome the Jewish converts were most numerous, and the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish nation best known. It is in addressing these therefore that the point is most largely insisted on. To the Grecian churches St. Paul is nearly silent on the subject, and only alludes in the most general way to their being called to the knowledge of God. Neither is the doctrine of personal election traced in the Epistle to the Hebrews. *They* had always prided themselves too much on their *national* privileges—and he does *not* tell them that they are *individually* chosen to salvation out of the wreck of their countrymen, by God's eternal decree, as it is reasonable to believe he would have done, if it had been either true in fact, or important in doctrine.

Thus far I have abridged the author's statement: what follows however is not only equally just and original, but it is so material to the point contended for by Bishop Tomline, and so happily illustrative of his argument, that I must produce the passage entire.

Secondly, if the passages usually alledged from St Paul, to prove the doctrine of personal election, were written by him in allusion either to the election of individuals, in so peculiar a manner as the first apostles of Christianity were chosen, or to the election of the Gentiles into the church of the true God; then it will follow, that in proportion as individuals ceased to be chosen in that special manner to fulfil the divine purposes and in proportion as the calling and conversion of the Gentiles ceased to be extraordinary, *when indeed the Church was composed of them alone*, the subject of Election will also cease to be insisted upon and taught by the early Christian authors. *The facts exactly correspond with this*

expectation. Among the canonical writers it is but vaguely alluded to after the destruction of Jerusalem: and in the writings of the fathers we find little authority for the doctrine, and not a single passage which is not reconcileable with that interpretation of St. Paul for which I have contended.'

P. 170. Go not forth to fight the Lord's battles,&c] Numberless are the passages in Luther's works which earnestly inculcate this principle. 'In his persevera, tanquam murus aheneus, nihil aliud inculcari tibi sinens, quam quo modo se ipse *ostendit et manifestat per verbum Christi.* [Vol 5 p. 197.] Tu habes Evangelium, es baptizatus, habes absolutionem, es Christianus, et tamen *dubitas* ? Deus dicit tibi " En habes filium meum, hunc audias et acceptes. Id si facis, jam *certus* es de fide et salute tua" Omittendae sunt disputationes, et dicendum, *Ego sum Christianas* Dedit tibi firmissima argumenta certitudinis et veritatis suae. Dedit Filium in carnem et mortem, instituit sacramenta, ut scias eum non velle fallacem esse, sed veracem Atque ita de *praedestinatione* tua certus eris, remotis omnibus curiosis et periculosis quæstionibus de Dei arcanis consiliis.'

After the same manner Bishop Hooper, in the preface to his Declaration of the Ten Commandments, condemns this superfluous and unscriptural speculation, as '*a curiosity and no religion, a presumption and no faith, a let of virtue and a furtherance of vice.*' [Vol. 6 p. 355. Quoted by Dr. Laurence in the notes to his Bampton Lectures, p. 403.]

To these authorities let me add the sentiments of one who has made the preacher's office his peculiar study. 'When all these circumstances are weighed together, I think it must be acknowledged that the preacher of absolute decrees gives too implicit confidence to human interpretation, and teaches the doctrine of Calvin for the doctrine of St. Paul. If it be so, it is no light matter. It is not a question of trifling importance, whether we disseminate just and worthy notions of the divine attributes. The general impression which the Scripture leaves upon our minds is this, that God desires his creatures to entertain a reverential love of his goodness, as well as a reverential awe of his justice, in his administration of the moral government of the world; and does not call upon us, in studying the terms

of our

acceptance with him, or in meditating upon his counsels, to abandon our notions of right and wrong, or the results of that gift of reason which he has permitted to survive the fall. Scripture, in short, throughout, aims at the heart. Christ, in the most unqualified terms, demands the love of mankind on the part of the Creator; a love which the doctrine of absolute decrees, in all minds of common mould, cannot fail to petrify [*Apostolical Preaching, chap. 2. part 1. p. 57*].'

APPENDIX:

ON THE SEVENTEENTH ARTICLE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

WHATEVER the true or the scriptural doctrine may be respecting Predestination and Election, it is still incumbent on the Members of the Church of England to prove that their opinions on these points are conformable to the Articles of Faith to which they have subscribed. The enquiry *then* becomes different in kind from that hitherto pursued, and of a more limited extent. In answer to those who contend that the Calvinistic doctrine of absolute decrees is set forth in the Seventeenth Article, our business is to shew, that such was not the *belief* and consequently not the *intention* of those who framed it: and this point being once established, the difficulty is thrown upon them to prove that *their* opinions may be reconciled with it.

In order to reduce this controverted question to as narrow limits as possible, I will first state a few preliminary matters of fact, which are undisputed on all sides; but which are of great importance towards forming a right judgment of the main subject of enquiry.

It is then, I apprehend, needless to give historical proof that Cranmer, with the assistance of Ridley, was the compiler of the Articles of our Church—that he and Melanchthon entertained a high respect for each other—that they maintained a long and confidential correspondence, which began at least as early as 1535 [*Winchester on the Seventeenth Art. p. 39.*]—that in 1548 Melanchthon suggested

[That the plan originated with Melanchthon and not with Cranmer,

as Dr. Winchester supposes, is proved by the extracts from Melanchthon's Letters, which Dr. Laurence has given in the notes to his Bampton Lectures. See note 6. to Serm. II.]

to Cranmer the plan which Cranmer afterwards intended to accomplish for setting forth a joint declaration of all the Protestant Churches—and although this design was dropped, in consequence of political events on the Continent, yet in 1552 a body of Articles for the Church of England was composed, the same in substance, and nearly the same in language, with those we now profess.

It is matter of fact equally undisputed, that Melanchthon *uniformly* taught, as Luther did in all his later writings, that the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees was not Scriptural—that Christ died for all men—that predestination relates only to the plan of redemption through Christ—that we have no concern with any purpose or decree of the Almighty, except as far as Christ is the subject of it, by whom, whosoever with true and lively faith believeth in him, will certainly be saved. Melanchthon, in particular allusion to Calvin's doctrine of decrees, calls him the *Zeno* of his time, and thus expresses himself upon the occasion of Bolsec's imprisonment at Geneva for a difference of opinion upon this point. 'Lelius mihi scribit tanta esse Genevae certamina de Stoica necessitate, ut carceri inclusus sit quidam a Zenone dissentiens.' Epistolae, Lond. p. 396. And again, in reference to the same subject, he says, 'Vide seculi furores, certamina Allo- brogica de *Stoica necessitate* tanta sunt, at careri inclusus sit quidam, qui a Zenone dissentit.' Ibid. p. 923.

These letters were written in the year 1552, the very year in which Cranmer completed his compilation of the Articles, about which he had corresponded on the most friendly terms with Melanchthon.

Cranmer's own opinions are distinctly delivered in the Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man,' published in 1543; from which work the following passage, which has often been quoted, will suffice for our present purpose.

'All men be also to be monished, and chiefly preachers, that in this highe mater, they lokinge on both sides, so attempre and moderate themselves, that neyther they so preache the grace of God, that they take away thereby free-will, nor on the other side so extolle free-will, that injury be done to the grace of God.'

What Calvin's doctrines were, it is hardly necessary to state by way of argument, for they are unquestionable and well known. Bishop Tomline has collected the passages from his writings which contain all the points for which his followers contend, and which we deny [*Refutation of Calvinism, chap. 7*]. Those relating to *predestination* may also be seen in Dr. Winchesters Dissertation on the seventeenth Article, whose summary I will here subjoin, as a just and plain statement of the case.

'Calvin's doctrine of Predestination appears, from the foregoing quotations, to be resolved into the sole will of God, both as to the elect and the reprobate. As to the first, he asserts the decrees of God to be absolute—without any respect to faith in Christ, or a good life. As to the reprobate, they by the same absolute and irrespective decree of God are predestinated and determined to sin [*Calv. Inst. lib. iii. c. 24. sect 14.*], and so to damnation. How he keeps clear of making God the author of sin, it behoves his followers to explain.' [Winchester, p. 17.]

It is farther remarkable, that Calvin, about the year 1548, offered his assistance to Cranmer in the work of Reformation in this country; but 'the Archbishop,' says Heylin, knew the man, and refused the offer [*Hist. of the Reformation, p. 65.*]'—a mortification which sunk deep into Calvin's mind, of which there are proofs so late as the year 1555 [*Winchester on the seventeenth Article, p. 41.*]: whereas the cordial agreement of Cranmer with Melanchthon is proved, not only by their uninterrupted correspondence, but by the very phrases used in the composition of the Articles, which coincide with those of the Augsburg Confession, drawn up by Melanchthon in 1530, and with various parts of his *Loci Theologici*, and other works.

The Confession of Wirtemberg, which was composed in 1551, is merely a repetition in substance and a revision of that of Augsburg. The agreement, in point of diction as well as doctrine, between these two Confessions and our own Articles is prominent and undisguised. Some of the most remarkable instances may be seen in the notes to Dr. Laurence's Bampton Lectures [*Notes 11, 12, and 15, to Serm. II.*]; the first and second Articles are taken almost *verbatim* from the Confession of Augsburg; and it is particularly deserving of notice, that the seventeenth

is one of those which were *wholly added* at the same time with the first and second, as well as those on Original Sin and Free-will, viz. in the interval between the first Manuscript sketch circulated among the bishops in 1551, and the final compilation of the Articles in 1552.

A verbal agreement between this Article and those Confessions on the point of Predestination cannot indeed be made out, because the consideration of it is expressly excluded from them, as needless and as leading to no good end.

'Non est hic opus' (says the Augsburg Confession) 'disputationibus de praedestinatione et similibus. Nam promissio est universalis et nihil detrahit operibus, imo exsuscitat ad fidem et vere bona opera.' Art. 20. *De Fide*.

The Saxon Confession also, which, as well as the Wirtemberg, is founded upon that of Augsburg, and which was published in 1551, speaks yet more plainly to the same purpose.

'Non addimus hic quaestiones de praedestinatione seu de electione; sed deducimus omnes lectores ad verbum Dei, et jubemus ut voluntatem Dei ex verbo ipsius discant, sicut Aeternus Pater expressa voce praecipit, *Hunc audite*. Non quaerant alias speculationes.' Art. *De Remissione Peccatarum, et Justification*.

It is pleasing and satisfactory to trace the progress of Melanchthon's opinions upon this subject. In the first dawning of the Reformation he as well as Luther had been led into those metaphysical discussions which Calvin afterwards moulded into a system, and incorporated with his exposition of the Christian doctrine. But so early as the year 1529 he renounced this error, and expunged the passages that contained it from the later editions of his *Loci Theologici*. Luther, who had in his early life maintained the same opinions, after the controversy with Erasmus about free-will never taught them; and although he did not, with the candour of Melanchthon, openly retract what he had once written, yet he bestowed the highest commendations on the last editions of Melanchthon's work, containing this correction. He also scrupled not to assert publicly, that at the beginning of the Reformation his creed was not completely settled: and in his last work of any importance he is anxious to point out the qualifications with which all he had ever said on the doctrine of absolute necessity ought to be received. 'Vos ergo, qui nunc

me audistis, memineritis me hoc docuisse, Non esse inquirendum de Praedestinatione *Dei absconditi*, sed in illis acquiescendum, quae revelantur per vocationem et per ministerium verbi Haec eadem alibi quoque in meis libris protestatus sum, et nunc etiam viva voce trado: *Ideo sum excusatus.*'

Dr. Laurence, to whom we are indebted for a learned, full, and accurate investigation of these points, and whose notes contain the most valuable proofs and authorities concerning them, observes, that after the Diet of Augsburg (in 1530) the obnoxious tenet of absolute necessity was no more heard of. (Bampt. Lect. p. 249.) So little ground is there for the pretence set up by some recent advocates of Calvinism, that the Reformers had not yet purified themselves entirely from the leaven of popery—and that when this thorough separation from the Romish corruptions took place, the doctrine in question naturally arose. The fact is directly *the reverse*. Predestination was a constant doctrine and a familiar term among divines for centuries before. But the Romanists taught a predestination founded on foreseen good works or merit, while the first Reformers, rejecting this with abhorrence, held a predestination that was equivalent to fatalism. This error however, as they advanced in the knowledge of the Scriptures, was by degrees abandoned; and a doctrine more truly Scriptural succeeded, that of predestination through Christ of all those who should build their faith on him. The proofs of this change in Melancthon's writings are innumerable: but there is one passage more remarkable than the rest, which occurs in a letter of his to Cranmer, in 1548, because it not only shews how thoroughly he disapproved the opinions formerly maintained on these points, but there is every reason to believe it was the cause of Cranmer's inserting that caution in the seventeenth Article, against dwelling in our thoughts upon *absolute decrees of predestination* [*sententiam praedestinationis*], which soon afterwards appeared.

'Nimis horridae fuerunt initio Stoicae disputationes apud nostros de fato, et disciplinae nocuerunt. Quare te rogo, ut de tali aliqua formula cogites.' Ep. xlv. lib. iii.

It is then as clear and demonstrable a truth as any historical fact whatever, that Cranmer, both before and during his compilation of the Articles, differed from Calvin, and that he agreed with Luther and Melancthon upon the points of Predestination and Election. Whether

their opinion was right or wrong is not now the question, but whether it was opposed to that of Calvin. Neither is it essential in this argument to shew the consistency of the language employed, or to explain how it is that those consequences do not flow from it, which its adversaries alledge. These are points upon which I have enlarged in the foregoing discourses: and a repetition of those discussions would not only be needless, but irrelevant in this place.

It cannot however fail to be observed, as characteristic marks of the respective schools, that Calvin is bold, precise, and peremptory, while the others are cautious and diffident in their language—'fearful,' according to the words of Ridley, 'to go farther than the text doth as it were lead them by the hand.' They seem to be aware also, that on subjects of this nature only a *partial* disclosure of the truth can be expected. If we cannot adequately comprehend the nature of God, if *time* and *succession of events* are ideas proper only to ourselves, and not applicable to him, how can we presume to speculate and argue upon his *antecedent* will and his *consequent* will, his *foreknowledge*, his purpose, and decrees? What he has thought fit to reveal, we receive with alacrity and thankfulness, but more than that we presume not, by way of inference and constructive argument, to ascertain: nor does it seem to be either wise or innocent to apply the knowledge that is revealed to any other use, than that of our own spiritual comfort and edification. Thus while Calvin is intent upon *definition* and *system*, they are careful to restrict themselves to the express declarations of Scripture, intent indeed upon rejecting error, but not solicitous about answering cavils or resolving curious questions—regardless, in short, how imperfect and unsatisfactory such a scheme may be to the understanding—but fully assured that enough is communicated of the divine counsels for our eternal interests; and that to seek to penetrate beyond this cometh of evil.

Let us now see how far the choice of words in the composition of the seventeenth Article supports the representation here given of the opinions held by the framers of it. And to save the trouble of reference, the whole is subjoined, both in Latin and in English, because some slight difference has been pointed out between the two not altogether indifferent to the question before us.

XVII. *De Praedestinatione, et Electione.*

Praedestinatio ad vitam, est aeternum Dei propositum,

In the English Article which follows, the words *added* in 1562 to the original Article of 1552 are expressed in capitals. The words *omitted* in 1562, which were in the Article of 1552, are given in the margin. The *variation* between the Latin and the English copies is marked in Italics.

XVII. *Of Predestination and Election.*

Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen IN CHRIST out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God he called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of GOD BY adoption: they be made like the image of

[The only begotten Jesus Christ. Ed. of 1552.]

his only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm *their* faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle *their* love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

'Furthermore

[After 'furthermore' the following words were in the Article of 1552, which are now omitted: 'though the decrees of Predestination be unknown to us, yet],

we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be

followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.'

Now we have already observed, that the metaphysical disputes about Necessity and Free-will had been long ago laid aside by the principal German Reformers with whom Cranmer corresponded, who had found by experience that their views ought to be confined to what is revealed in Scripture. It was not then because the subject was *new*, and because their minds had not yet been raised to the contemplation and study of these abstract enquiries, that they took this limited ground; but they had *run through* and exhausted the controversy, and found that the only resting place after these wearisome flights was in the revealed word of God.

It is material to bear this in mind; because it is sometimes imagined, that the doctrines which afterwards took the name of Calvinism, had not been fully presented to the minds of these early divines, but were the fruits of a more thorough and complete reformation in religion.

There are then two points in the wording of the seventeenth Article, to which the attention should be directed, in order to judge fairly of our main position.

The FIRST is, that in many of the *most remarkable phrases* we trace the language of those who disapproved the Calvinistic doctrines, and 'the striking feature of whose system was,' as Dr. Laurence observes, ' *an election in Christ.*' p. 389.

Quos in Christo elegit. Art. 17.] Melanchthon has the following passage in his. Loci Theologici.

Ex hominum genere a maledicto et exitio liberare.] Can we doubt, says Dr. Laurence, the source or tendency of the expressions 'quos elegit ex hominum genere,' when we recollect the frequent recurrence of language almost similar, and of an idea precisely the same, in the writings of Melanchthon? 'Quod

After reading these passages, to make the proof more convincing, let us turn to the language of Calvin's Institute.

However undeniable it may be, that to God everything which happens throughout all time is known in its minutest detail from all eternity, and therefore that the destiny of each individual is foreseen as well as that of whole communities, yet it was characteristic of the Lutheran Reformers,

instructed as they had been by experience in the vanity of all metaphysical speculations upon these subjects, to teach a predestination not of *individuals*, but of the Church *collectively*, into which Church individuals are called, and according to their faith and obedience *elected* to eternal life. Although they might acknowledge that God was the sole author and arbiter of this dispensation, as he is of all that happens in the material world, yet they did not allow, that every single act was decreed and rendered necessary by him in the one case more than in the other: and in the language they employ on this unfathomable question, they are careful not to leave that impression upon the mind. In this caution the English Reformers imitated their example. 'De electione,' says Melancthon, 'a *posterio*re judicamus;' and as Bishop Bancroft observed at the Hampton Court conference, 'that we ought to reason, rather *ascendendo* than *descendendo*, thus: I live in obedience to God, in love with my neighbour, &c. therefore I trust that God hath elected me;' so Cranmer expressly teaches that we ought not to assure ourselfe, that we be elected any otherwise, than by felyng of spiritual motions in our hart, and by the tokens of good and vertuous livyng [*Necessary Doctrine and Erudition. Chap. on Free-will.*]' In which passage he has expressed, though somewhat more mildly, the very sentiment of Luther, 'Perniciosa et pestilens cogitatio est de *quare*, ac certum affert interitum, praesertim cum ascendimus altius, et de *praedestinatione volumus philosophari*' Op. vol. vi. p. 204. How intimately this accords with the language of the Article it is needless to point out.

I proceed therefore to notice other expressions which lead to the same conclusion.

Quemadmodum praedestinationis et electionis nostrae in Christo pia consideratio *dulcis, suavis et ineffabilis consolationis plena est* &c.] No candid enquirer will refuse to acknowledge that when Cranmer wrote this clause, the following words of Melancthon were in his mind. 'Quos elegit hos et vocavit. Rom. 8. *Dulcem, salutarem, et multiplicem consolationem* continet haec sententia, quae tamen velut inanis ab otiosis lectoribus praeteritus.' Loci Theol. fol. 258,

Again, Ita hominibus *curiosis*, carnalibus, et spiritu Christi destitutis, ob oculos perpetuo versari praedestinationis Dei sententiam,

perniciosissimum est *praecipitium*, unde illos diabolus protrudit, vel in desperationem, vel in aequi perniciosam *impurissimae vita securitatem*.] [*Securitatem. Recklessness. The use of the word wretch- less Dr. Johnson calls an unaccountable corruption in our language. It probably arose from observing the original word to bespelt recheless\ and after it became obsolete in conversation, so as to be learnt by the eye rather than the ear, the ch in the first syllable came to be pronounced not as our Saxon ancestors did, reck, but as it is in rich: this led to the further corruption wretch, nothing being more common in practice than to confound and at length to identify a foreign or an obsolete word with some word of the language that is well known and in frequent use. The orthography of the old copies of our Articles ought surely to be restored.*]

This sentiment abounds in Luther's writings. In the following passages, some of the most remarkable phrases employed by the framer of the Article will be found.

Curiosis in posteriore sententia 'Multi sunt vocati, pauci electi,' magna materia absurditatis et impiarum cogitationum est. Quos Deus eligit necessario salvantur; e contra vero, quos non eligit, quicquid etiam fecerint, quaecunque pietatis studium praestent, tamen exitium declinare non poterunt, neque salutem consequentur. Proinde ergo me necessitati non opponam Verum, si nunc hae cogitationes cum superioribus de praedestinatione conferantur, id certo deprehendetur, priores ex diabolo esse, quae hominibus cum exitiali scandalo sunt, ut vel nunc desperent, vel omnem pietatis sehsuni rejiciant. Postilia Domestica. p. 57.

Luther proceeds in the same tract to reason against the doctrine of, election from eternity in the mind of God, to assert that it is the will of God that all men should be saved, and that none should perish, and to describe the Elect as those who 'diligenter Evangelium audiunt, in Christum credunt, *fidem in bonis fructibus declarant.*' Of these he says, 'Hi demum veri Christiani evadunt. Ubi e contra ii, qui sentiunt Dei voluntatem non esse, ut *omnes salventur, aut in desperationem ruunt, aut in securissimam impietatem dissolvuntur.*'

In the remarkable use of the word *praecipitium* we also recognize the style of Luther, who employs it precisely in the same sense. Speaking of the Monks, he says, His enim avertunt corda hominum a fide et communi

salutis via ad sua *praescipitia*. Op. vol. i. p. 370.

In the concluding cautions with regard to the *promises* and the *will* of God, the same character is observable which marks the writings both of Luther and Melanchthon, an anxiety to exclude the doctrine of personal election and reprobation, as well as that of irrespective decrees from all eternity.

Deinde *promissiones* divinas sic amplecti oportet, ut nobis in sacris literis *generaliter* propositae sunt.]

Among the many passages of Luther's works in which this point is inculcated, the following may suffice for our purpose. 'Non est restringenda *generalis promissio*, qua gratiam bonis, malis, parvis, magnis, frigidis, calidis, aridis et viridibus offert; non est *arctanda* ad illos, qui, talaribus stolis induti, pii et sancti esse volunt.' Seckendorf, vol. i. lib. 2. sect. 43. §. 5.

Quod autem Christum non omnes accipiunt *ipsorum culpa fit*, quod non credunt, et indulgent diffidentiae suae. Interim manet *sententia Dei et promissio universalis*, quod Deus omnes homines vult salvos esse.' Op. iv. p. 441.

In Melanchthon's works the same idea perpetually occurs. 'Est igitur in voluntate Dei causa electionis misericordia et meritum Christi, sed concurrere oportet apprehensionem nostram. Cum enim *promissio gratiae sit universalis*, ut manifestum est, et necesse sit nos obedire promissioni, aliquod discrimen inter electos et rejectos *a voluntate nostra* sumendum est, videlicet, repugnantes promissioni rejici; e contra vero amplectentes promissionem recipi.' Op. vol. iii. p. 683. Indeed the whole chapter on Predestination in his Loci Theologici might be transcribed as evidence of these opinions.

'Duo autem sunt considerata in promissione Evangelii, videlicet, quod et *promittit justitiam*, et quod *promissio est universalis*. Ideo neque dignitatem nostram respicere debemus, *neque ex uni-versali promissione efficere*.

Sed singuli nos in illam universalem includamus. Cum igitur de electione angimur aut disputamus, *non ordimur a nostris supputationibus*, vel a lege, sed a promissione Evangelii.' Loc. Theol. de Praedest. ed. 1535.

'Ut praedicatio poenitentiae universalis est,

et omnefe arguit, ut Rom. iii. clare dicitur; ita et *promissio gratia est universalis*, ut multa dicta testantur....Removeamus igitur a Paulo Stoicas disputationes, quae fidem et invocationem evertunt ...Adversus has imaginations discamus voluntatem Dei ex Evangelio, agnoscamus promissionem esse *universalem*, ut fides et invocatio accendi possit.' Ibid. fol. 259.

Against the folly of speculating on the Divine will, except as far as it is revealed in Scripture, Dr. Laurence has collected, in his valuable notes to the Bampton Lectures, a multitude of passages from Luther's and Melanchthon's works. The following may serve to illustrate our main position, that the language of our Article is manifestly influenced by their writings.

It can hardly be doubted, when such coincidences of language are produced, that the compiler of the Article agreed in opinion with Melanchthon upon the main subject under consideration. I proceed therefore in the SECOND place to shew, from the phraseology of the Article itself, how studiously Cranmer endeavoured to confine himself to the very text of Scripture, and, avoiding all abstract speculation about absolute decrees, to teach only an *election in Christ*.

For this purpose it will be more convenient to adduce the words of the English Article.

Before the foundations of the world were laid.]

'According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world.' Ephes. 1:4.

To deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.]

'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' Gal. 3:13. ;

In whom we have redemption through his blood.' Ephes. 1:7.
'That he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' Ephes. 1:10.
'And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory.' Rom. 9:23.

Called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season. They through grace obey the calling.]

'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are *the* called according to his purpose.' Rom. 8:28. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works,

but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus.' 2 Tim.

1:9.

'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.*' 1 Pet. 1:2.

They be justified freely.]

'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' Rom. 3:24.

They be made sons of God by adoption.]

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Gal. 4:5.

They be made like the image of his only- begotten Son Jesus Christ.]

'Whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' Rom. 8:29.

They walk religiously in good works.] 'Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' Eph. 2:10.

And at length by God's mercy they attain everlasting felicity.]

'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Matt. 25:34.

Cranmer's plan was to avoid all abstract speculation about God's decrees, and to teach only *an election in Christ*; and by so doing, he not only adheres closely to the authority of Scripture, but he virtually includes the *terms* and *conditions* of the Christian covenant under the notion of election. That this principle was not lost sight of or weakened by the resettlers of our Church in Queen Elizabeth's reign, is evident from the very alteration, slight as it is, which the seventeenth Article underwent at the revision of 1562. For, as if in order to mark this point decisively, in the sentence which before ran 'whom he hath chosen out of

mankind,' they introduced the words 'in Christ' after the word 'chosen,' although the context sufficiently implied that such was the meaning of the first compiler. The fact however is material, as an argument against those writers who pretend that the Reformers of 1562 were more Calvinistic than those of Edward the Sixth's reign.

The Articles were not published in English till 1571. In this translation Dr. Laurence has justly remarked on a deviation from the original which, though probably undesigned and not very important, yet, as far as it goes, weakens the anti-calvinistic character of the seventeenth Article. The words '*fidem nostrum*' and '*amorem nostrum*,' are translated '*their* faith' and

'*their* love.' Whereas, he observes, the pronoun *noster* seems not to have been adventitiously adopted, the use of it being to impress the Lutheran idea of election, not as individuals but as *Christ*, in a character common to us all, and one to which alone confidence in eternal salvation is attached. 'Qui de hoc (viz. de praedestinatione) dubi tat,' remarks Bucer in his explanation of Melanchthon's doctrine, 'nequit esse Christi- anus. Praesumendum igitur, ut principium fidei, *nos omnes* a Deo esse praescitos, praefinitos, separates a reliquis, et selectos in hoc, ut aeternum servemur, hocque propositum Dei mutari non posse.' Note 4. to Serm. viii.

As some compensation however for this defect, the English translation serves as a commentary upon one passage which in the Latin is, from the idiom of the language, equivocal.

'Quemadmodum *praedestinationis et electionis nostrae* in Christo pia consideratio,' may be translated 'As the godly consideration of *our predestination and election* in Christ;' but this is *not* the authorized translation; and the difference is not immaterial. The Article runs in English, 'As the godly consideration of *predestination and our election in Christ*; separating from *predestination*, (which it thus represents as relating *generally* to the purpose of redemption by Christ,) and adding it to *election* which by the very meaning of the term is necessarily applied to *individuals*.

The force of this distinction, which the English translation has made apparent, is clearly in favour of the Lutheran construction: but I am inclined to think it has been hitherto unobserved, because Dr. Laurence, when quoting the English Article, inadvertently gives the clause not as it

is in the authentic copy, but thus, 'the godly consideration of *our* predestination and election in Christ.' And Dr. Winchester commits the equivalent error of omitting the pronoun *our* altogether, 'the godly consideration of predestination and election, &c.'

It is observable then of this Article, that it neither sanctions the doctrine of reprobation, nor that of *absolute* predestination to life. But it is farther to be observed, as Playfere has well pointed out, that it speaks of two kinds of predestination, one of which is recommended to us, the other condemned. Predestination, rightly and piously considered, that is, not absolute or irrespective, but with respect to faith in Christ working by love, is a sweet and comfortable doctrine: but 'to have continually before one's eyes the *sentence* of predestination,' is a different thing from the *godly consideration of predestination in Christ*.

'What is this sentence? Playfere asks. The bare and naked sentence; that very decree itself which is expressed in the first of the Lambeth Articles, *That God hath predestinated some men to life, and hath reprobated some men to death*, without any mention or consideration of Christ, of faith, of God's prescience, or any other of his attributes.'

The *sentence* therefore of predestination, without respect to the *manner* of it, is a downfall; but the *manner* of it, our being *chosen in Christ*, is the fountain of all comfort, and hope, and godliness.'

And whereas it saith; *furthermore we must receive* &c. It intendeth to give further remedy against the harm, which may be taken by curious and carnal persons, from the sentence of predestination had continually before their eyes: which harm ariseth from the sentence *alone*, without reference and without order to the general promises of God. For if we receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture, it is not possible we should conceive that God hath *decreed* any sentence of predestination before the contemplation of the success and event of those his general promises. For if he have before decreed to give faith and salvation *only to some few chosen already* thereunto, and then come after with a *general promise of salvation unto all* upon condition of faith, this promise must needs be to many illusory and deceitful; and thence it comes that the sentence of predestination is a downfall to despair and carelessness.'

When therefore the Article bids us regard predestination always in conjunction with the *general promises* of God and with his *will expressly declared in Scripture*, it does in effect condemn that peremptory doctrine which Calvin and his followers inculcate. It does not presume to explain theoretically to the human understanding what is utterly beyond the limit of our faculties, but for all practical purposes it teaches us to consider the subject as St. Paul has done [*Rom. 8:29*], in an intelligible order—*God's purpose being founded on his foreknowledge*, (not as Calvin boldly asserts, his foreknowledge being the consequence of his own decree,) and man's acceptance of the promised redemption being left to his own choice.

In this explanation no farther difficulty is involved, than what belongs equally to the scheme of natural religion, viz. *the choice of good and evil being left to his creatures by a Being of infinite power and goodness*.

But with these difficulties I have in this part of the argument no farther concern: my object being here to shew, that the sense of our Articles is not *with* the Calvinists, but *against* them. If any further proof is requisite, it is furnished by themselves—by their own repeated and importunate attempts during the reign of Elizabeth and her two next successors to procure some more **explicit** declaration from authority upon these points.

'During this period,' says Dr. Winchester, the Calvinists were so little satisfied, that our Articles came up to their doctrines, that they were frequently calling for additions to them, to make them speak agreeably to their minds.' In Queen Elizabeth's reign indeed the question was fairly brought to an issue. Archbishop Whitgift was induced in 1595 by a party of Cambridge divines to put forth under his own authority, supported by the opinions of a few others whom he had assembled at Lambeth for that purpose, a series of articles explanatory of the disputed points. For this offence he was sharply reprimanded and threatened with punishment by the Queen; who however at length accepted his apology, that they were not intended as a standing rule to direct the Church, but merely as answers to certain questions which had been warmly disputed at Cambridge, sent with a view to compose the differences in that University.

In order that the wide disagreement between these doctrines and the Articles of the Church of England may be seen at one view, I have subjoined in a note the Lambeth Articles, together with that

summary of the decrees of the Synod of Dort which Heylin has given from Tilenus, as the most moderate and impartial account of their proceedings.

LAMBETH ARTICLES.

1. God from eternity hath predestinated certain men unto life ; certain men he hath reprobated.
2. The moving or efficient cause of predestination unto life, is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of any thing that is in the person predestinated, but only the good-will and pleasure of God.
3. There is predetermined a certain number of the predestinate, which can neither be augmented nor diminished.
4. Those who are not predestinated to salvation shall be necessarily damned for their sins.
5. A true, living, and justifying faith, and the Spirit of God justifying, is not extinguished, falleth not away, vanisheth not away in the elect, either totally or finally.
6. A man truly faithful, that is, such a one who is endued with a justifying faith, is certain, with the full assurance of faith, of the remission of his sins, and of his everlasting salvation by Christ.
7. Saving grace is not given, is not granted, is not communicated to all men, by which they may be saved if they will.
8. No man can come unto Christ, unless it be given unto him, and unless the Father shall draw him; and all men are not drawn by the Father, that they may come to the Son.
9. It is not in the will or power of every one to be saved.

In conclusion let me observe, or rather let me remind the reader of what is one main

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SYNOD OF DORT, as exhibited by Tilenus. See Heylin's Quinquarticular History, part 1. c. 6. sect. 7.

Art. 1. *Of Divine Predestination.*

That God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation a very small number of men, without any regard to their faith or obedience whatsoever; and secluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and appointed them by the same decree to eternal damnation, without any

regard to their infidelity or impenitency.

Art. 2. *Of the Merit and Effect of Christ's Death.*

That Jesus Christ hath not suffered death for any other, but for those elect only; having neither had any intent nor commandment of his Father, to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

Art. 3. *Of Mans Will in the state of Nature.*

That by Adam's fall his posterity lost their free-will, being put to an unavoidable necessity to do, or not to do, whatsoever they do, or do not, whether it be good or evil; being thereunto predestinated by the eternal and effectual secret decree of God.

Art. 4. *Of the Manner of Conversion.*

That God, to save his elect from the corrupt mass, doth beget faith in them by a power equal to that whereby he created the world, and raised up the dead; insomuch, that such, unto whom he gives that grace, cannot reject it, and the rest, being reprobate, cannot accept it.

Art. 5. *Of the Certainty of Perseverance.*

That such as have once received that grace by faith, can never fall from it finally or totally, notwithstanding the most enormous sins they can commit.

object of the argument pursued in these discourses, that the cautious language of our Church is not the result of an *equivocal and compromising policy*, studious to include discordant sects under a nominal conformity of doctrine, as it has been sometimes represented even by those who admit the interpretation here contended for, but that it necessarily arises out of the *nature of the subject*, and could not be more peremptory than it is, without contradicting some truth which is as clearly revealed in Scripture as that which the Calvinists make the foundation of their system. That this difficulty is *not peculiar* to revelation, has been proved at length in the body of the work. It has been proved that in this respect, as in most others, revealed is *analogous* to natural religion—and that reason is not *shocked*, however it may be *humbled*, by any exposition of the contested propositions, except by that which asserts one of them to the exclusion of the other.

THE END.

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